

PLAYBOY

PHILIPPINES

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2019

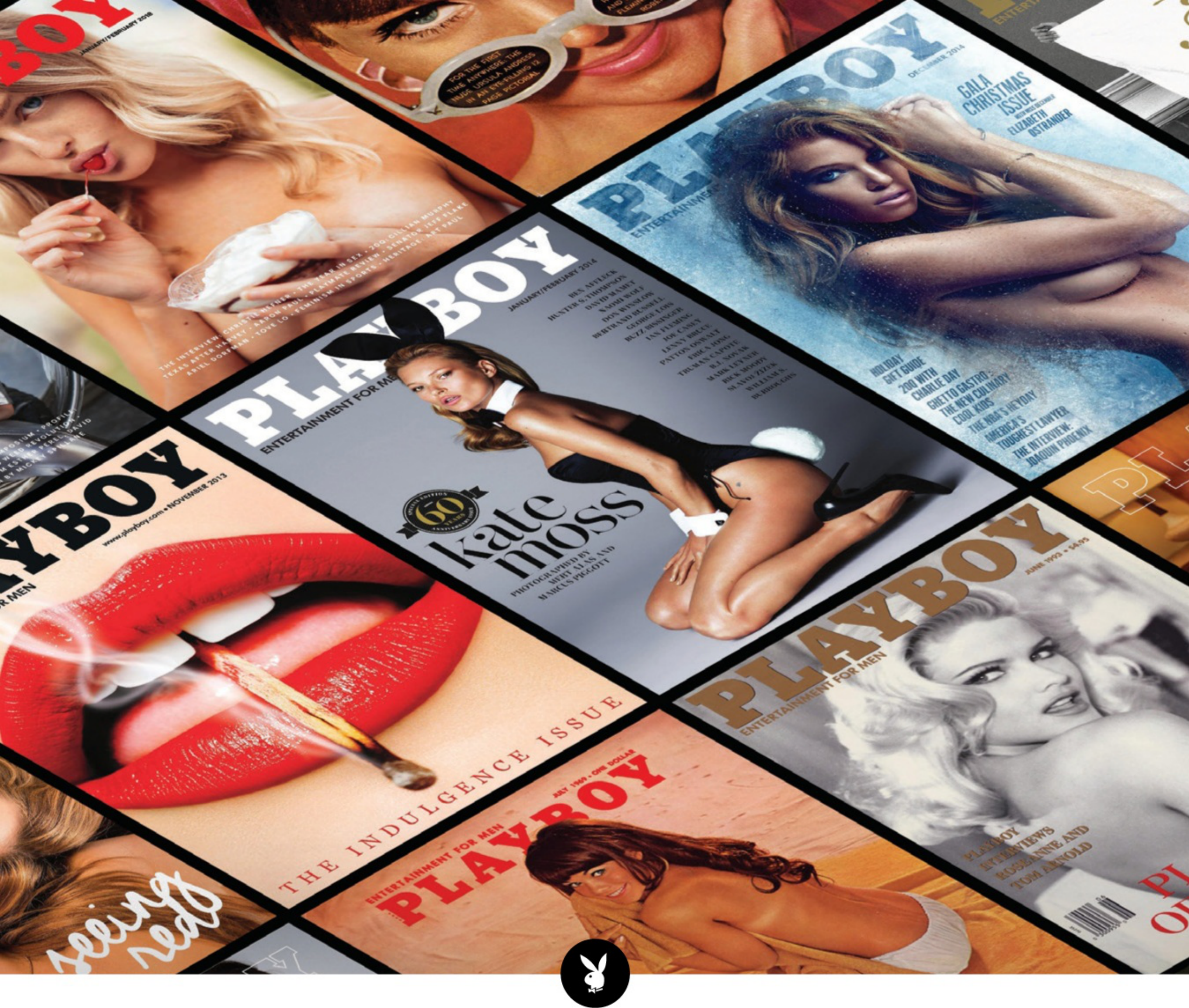
2019 PLAYMATE OF THE YEAR

Joana David



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Christened in 1965, our first international club kicked off an especially heady chapter in Playboy history



PLAYBOY



COVER GIRL
2019 PMOY
JOANA DAVID



TURN IT UP.

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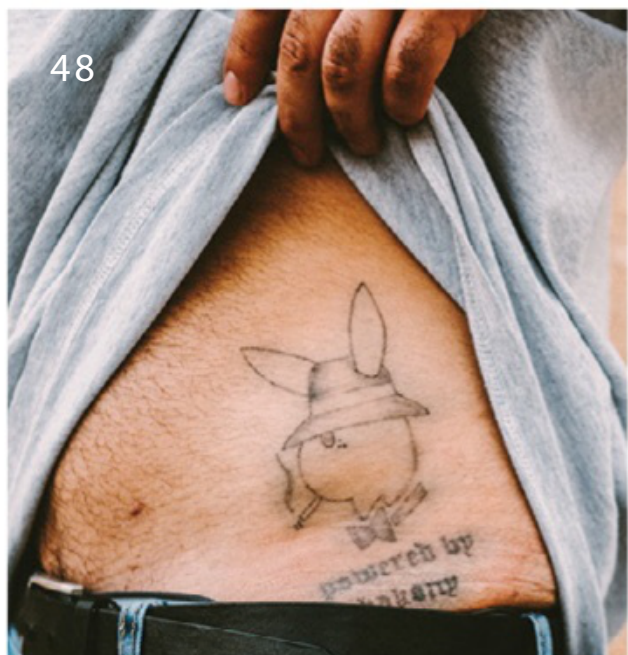
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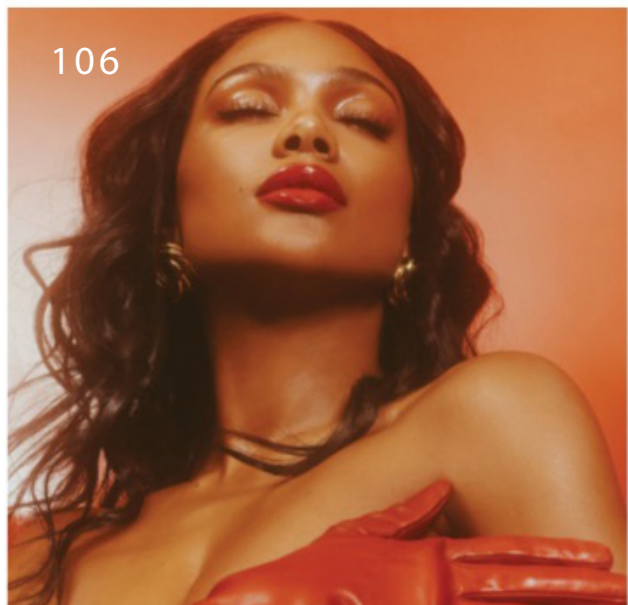


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OUR COVER



ISSUE NO. 95

PMOY ISSUE

COVER GIRL PMOY JOANA DAVID

PHOTOGRAPHED BY OWEN REYES

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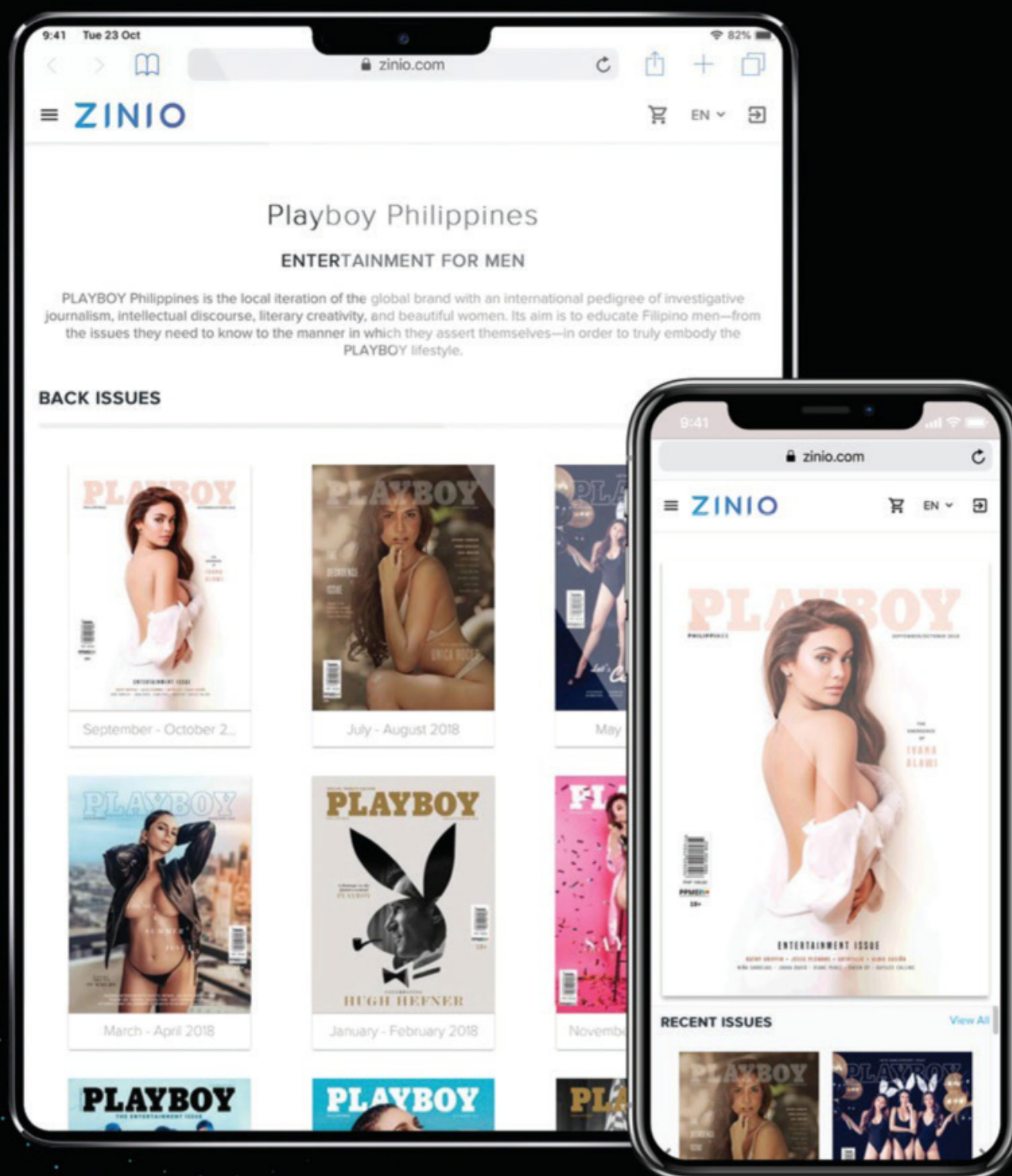
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ISSUE NO. 95

PLAYGROUND





TECHNOLOGY



NACON REVOLUTION UNLIMITED PRO CONTROLLER

For hardcore gamers, the standard PS4 controller may not be enough. If you're on such gamer, the Nacon Revolution Unlimited Pro is definitely worth a look. The Revolution Unlimited packs four extra programmable buttons, customizable analog sticks, larger face buttons, and an asymmetrical layout. Aside from these features, the Revolution Unlimited also has internal weight compartments, meaning you can customize the controller's weight if you need more heft. Best of all, the controller isn't just for PS4, it's also PC-compatible.

ONEPLUS 7T

Ever since it started operations back in 2013, OnePlus has become one of the go-to Android brands of tech enthusiasts thanks to its phones with powerful hardware, impressive features, and near-stock Android, all at competitive price points. The brand's latest phone is the OnePlus 7T, and it packs a flagship Snapdragon 855+, a triple-camera setup, and a 90Hz display. To top it all off, the OnePlus 7T is the first phone the new Android 10 operating system out-of-the-box.



IPHONE 11 PRO

It's been a long time coming, but finally Apple has jumped to a triple-camera setup for its new iPhone 11 Pro. While lots of Android smartphones have long packed triple-camera systems, the iPhone 11 Pro's shooters might just be the best yet. While the phone's camera setup may seem standard, the iPhone 11 Pro's wide-angle and zoomed-in shots are up there with the best. Plus, the iPhone 11 Pro is still the best phone for video right now.

DJI OSMO ACTION

If you're into high-octane sports or activities, it's always a great idea to bring a camera with you to capture your thrilling experiences on video. Though not just any camera will do, you need a small action camera, and the DJI Osmo Action should fit the bill. Osmo Action is a tiny action cam with impressive video quality, effective stabilization, and a solid build quality, all for a price that's lower than its main competitor, the GoPro.

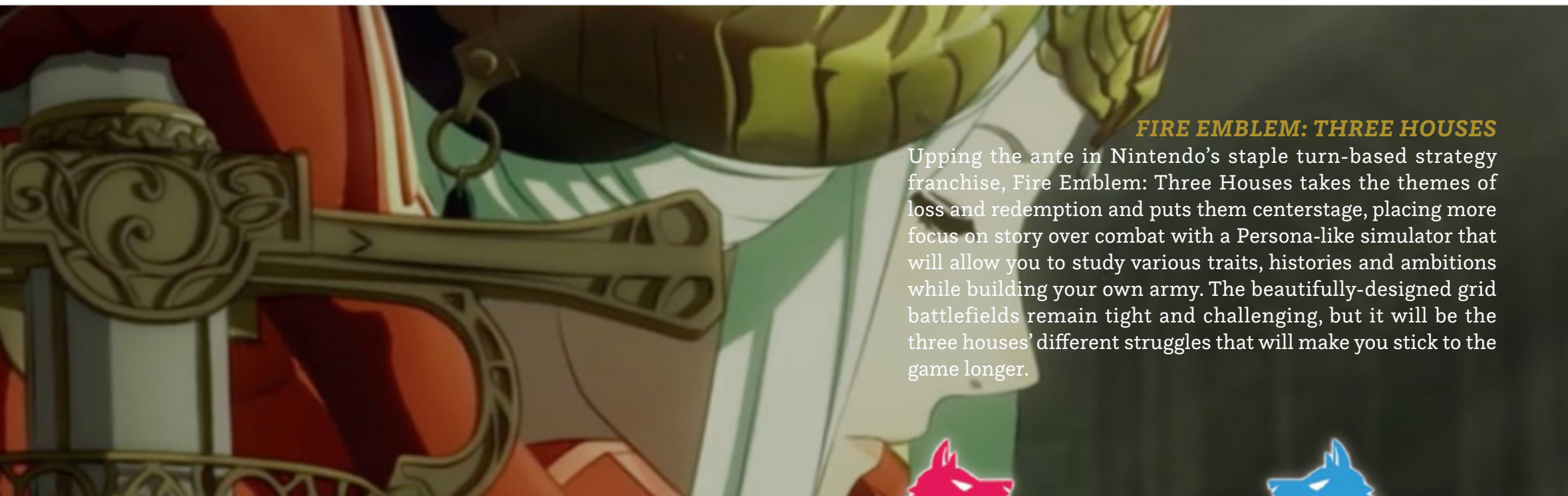


MICROSOFT SURFACE PRO X

Aside from showing off its vision for the future of portables, Microsoft announced the Surface Pro X during its recent Build Conference. What makes the Surface Pro X stand out from other laptops is that it runs on an ARM processor – basically a souped-up smartphone processor. Thanks to this, the Surface Pro should be powerful, all while being lighter and longer lasting; not to mention that it has built-in LTE connectivity so you can work anywhere you go.



GAMING



FIRE EMBLEM: THREE HOUSES

Upping the ante in Nintendo's staple turn-based strategy franchise, Fire Emblem: Three Houses takes the themes of loss and redemption and puts them centerstage, placing more focus on story over combat with a Persona-like simulator that will allow you to study various traits, histories and ambitions while building your own army. The beautifully-designed grid battlefields remain tight and challenging, but it will be the three houses' different struggles that will make you stick to the game longer.

POKEMON: SWORD AND SHIELD

The tried-and-tested formula of the Pokemon games remains to endure, as the eighth generation titles in the series, Sword and Shield, hits shelves in November. Set in the Europe-inspired Galar Region, the games showcase several new mechanics, including Pokemon jobs and the Dynamax feature, a temporary ability which enables a Pokemon to grow in giant-size and obtain augmented capabilities.



THE LAST OF US PART II

Ellie's journey across a post-apocalyptic United States continues with the release of The Last of Us Part II. Troy Baker and Ashley Johnson reprise their roles as Joel and Ellie, as the duo comes into conflict with a mysterious cult that is plaguing the countryside five years after their first adventure. Naughty Dog promises another emotional tale and an improved scale building from the first TLOU.

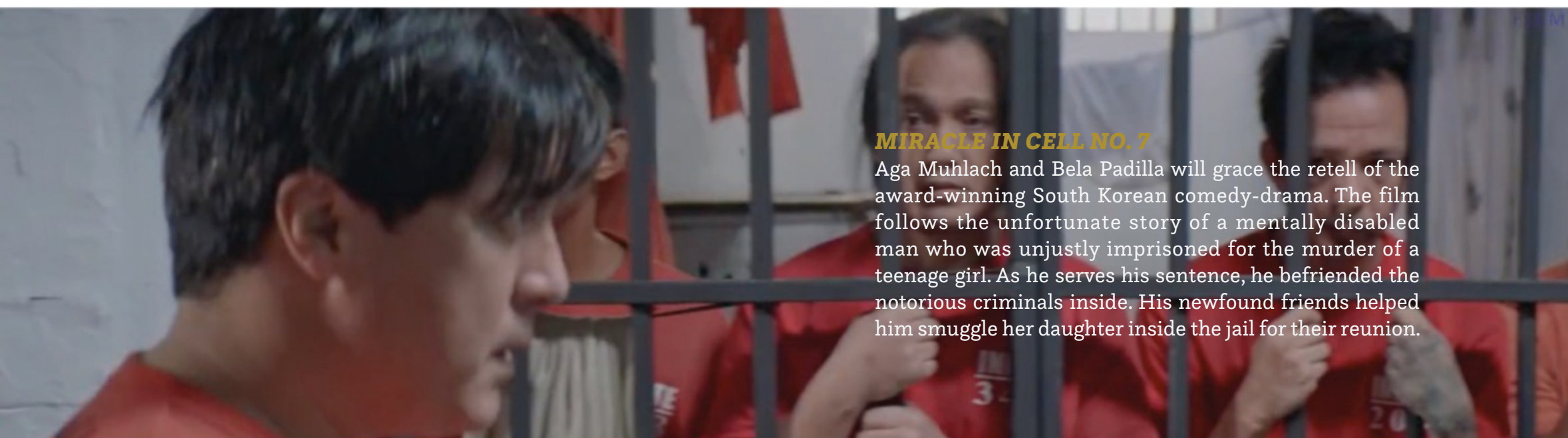
DEVIL MAY CRY 5

Devil May Cry 5 is an absolutely stunning return to form that builds on various improvements Ninja Theory has incorporated to the series' prequel game and spinoff DmC. The game's stylish combat cements itself as the strongest in the franchise and the story does a great job of balancing all main characters at an enticing and rewarding pace. Truly, it's great to have Dante and Nero back.



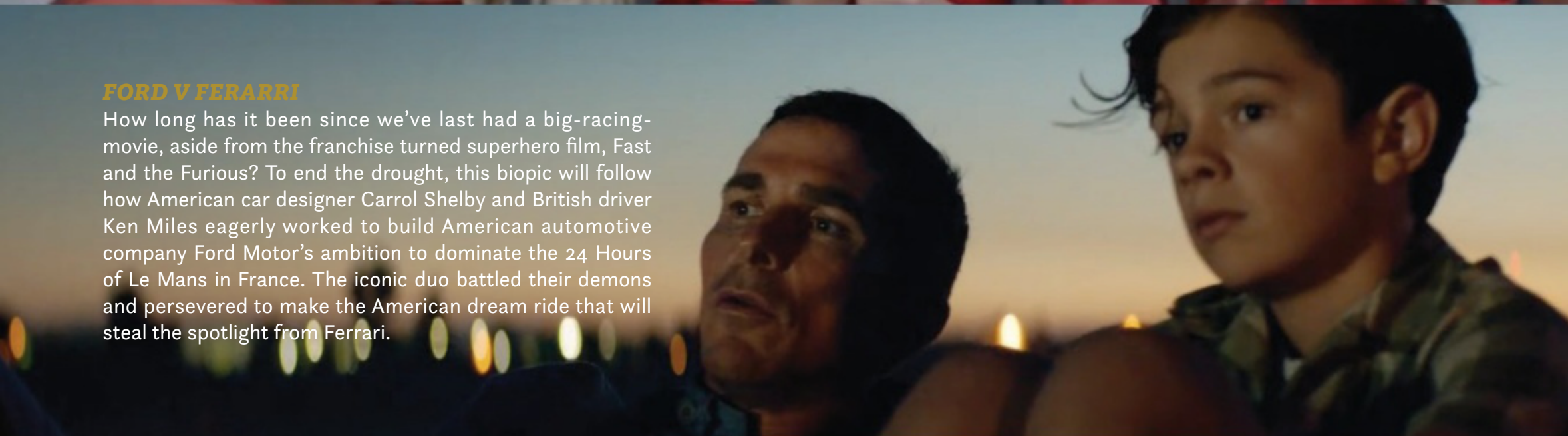


MOVIES



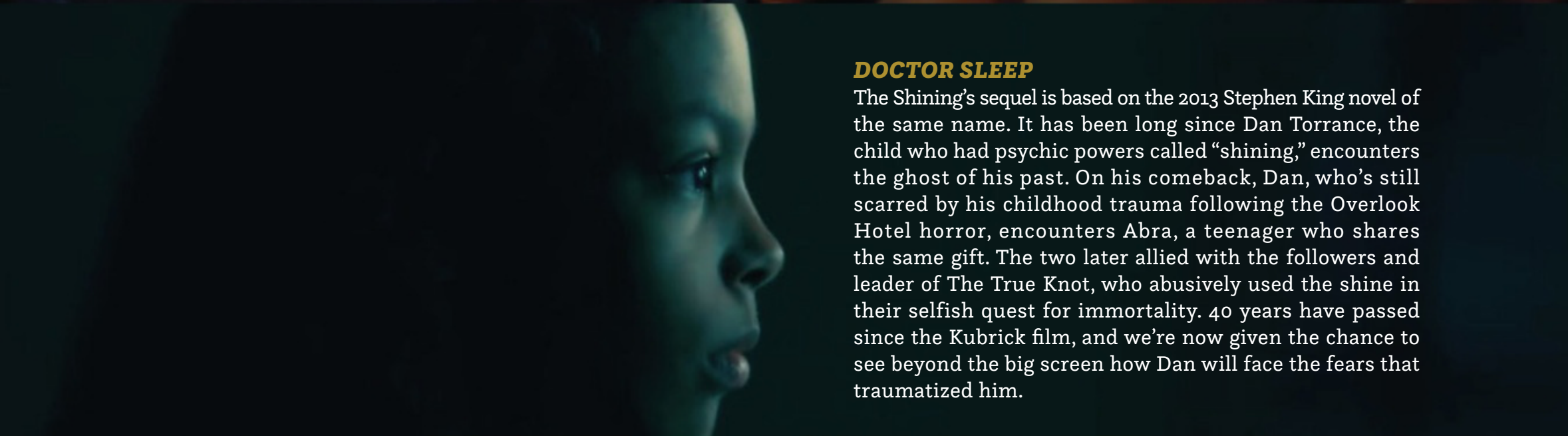
MIRACLE IN CELL NO. 7

Aga Muhlach and Bela Padilla will grace the retell of the award-winning South Korean comedy-drama. The film follows the unfortunate story of a mentally disabled man who was unjustly imprisoned for the murder of a teenage girl. As he serves his sentence, he befriendeds the notorious criminals inside. His newfound friends helped him smuggle her daughter inside the jail for their reunion.



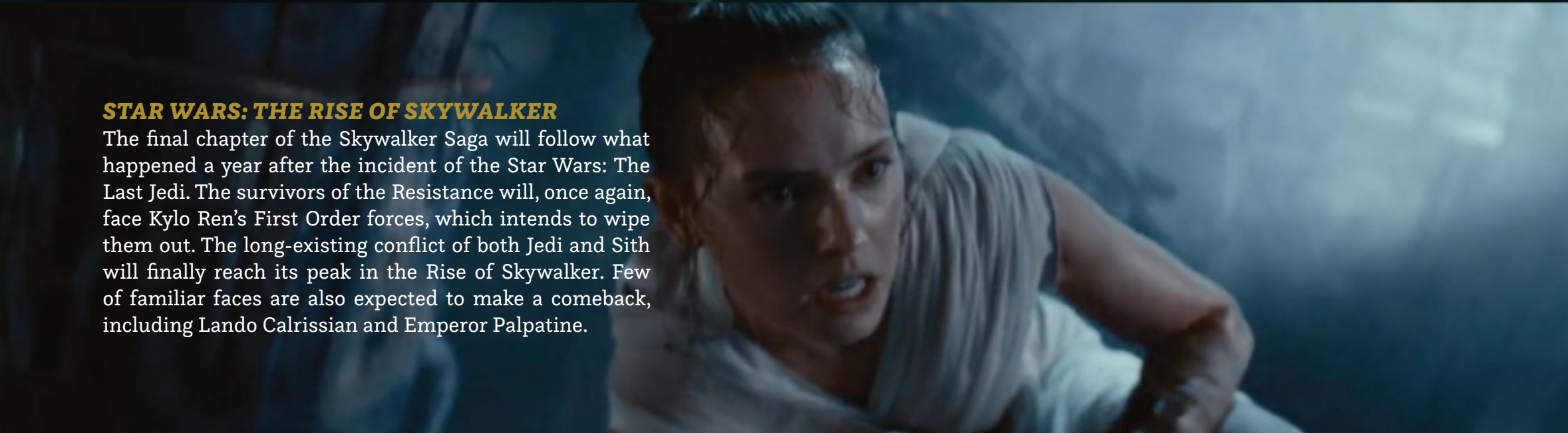
FORD V FERRARI

How long has it been since we've last had a big-racing-movie, aside from the franchise turned superhero film, Fast and the Furious? To end the drought, this biopic will follow how American car designer Carrol Shelby and British driver Ken Miles eagerly worked to build American automotive company Ford Motor's ambition to dominate the 24 Hours of Le Mans in France. The iconic duo battled their demons and persevered to make the American dream ride that will steal the spotlight from Ferrari.



DOCTOR SLEEP

The Shining's sequel is based on the 2013 Stephen King novel of the same name. It has been long since Dan Torrance, the child who had psychic powers called "shining," encounters the ghost of his past. On his comeback, Dan, who's still scarred by his childhood trauma following the Overlook Hotel horror, encounters Abra, a teenager who shares the same gift. The two later allied with the followers and leader of The True Knot, who abusively used the shine in their selfish quest for immortality. 40 years have passed since the Kubrick film, and we're now given the chance to see beyond the big screen how Dan will face the fears that traumatized him.



STAR WARS: THE RISE OF SKYWALKER

The final chapter of the Skywalker Saga will follow what happened a year after the incident of the Star Wars: The Last Jedi. The survivors of the Resistance will, once again, face Kylo Ren's First Order forces, which intends to wipe them out. The long-existing conflict of both Jedi and Sith will finally reach its peak in the Rise of Skywalker. Few of familiar faces are also expected to make a comeback, including Lando Calrissian and Emperor Palpatine.



MUSIC

FOR THE RECORD

Vinyl versus digital—homegrown vinyl records stores in the metro talk about the thriving charm of the good ol’ plaka.

BY HANNA SORBITO



NORTHWEST ESTATE AND COLLECTIBLES

This go-to collectibles shop has stood its ground for five years. Northwest Estate and Collectibles takes pride in having the largest inventory of all-original and affordable collectibles in the country. Their store in Kamuning and their newest branch in BF Homes Parañaque house a wide selection of discs, toys, movie posters, ephemera, and of course, vinyl records and audio gear!

Contrary to the fleeting and hypercompetitive digital music industry, they like how each vinyl record is sentimental and carries its own story through time— a quality that interests their younger market. When asked about the appeal of vinyl, they expressed, “Bitin ang digital streaming.” The distinct sound distortion that comes with playing a record has its charm as opposed to the predictable quality of digital music.

PLAKA EXPRESS

True to its name, the community praises Plaka Express for being on their toes in finding and offering fresh finds for all ages. Their quaint store in Bagong Pag-asa, Quezon City first opened its doors in 2016 and since then housed the biggest collection of metal albums in the country. They are inspired to satiate the vinyl hunt of their patrons, especially the new and young customers who visit their store to get their first records.

For them, being able to “hold your music” is the most enchanting part of collecting vinyl: “With streaming, you really have no tangible object that represents your music.” As they continue to serve a growing and younger community of enthusiasts, they look forward to a bigger future for the vinyl industry in the country.



SPINDLE HOLE RECORDS

What started as decluttering turned out to be a solid business venture for Spindle Hole Records. Four years ago, it was just about selling preloved and duplicate copies online. Until in 2017, its owner Randall Ballesteros eventually decided to open up his shop in Makati. Known for its fresh look and feel, the store serves as a hub for multiple sellers, such as Black Circles, Haul, On The Corner, Rootdown Records, Bear’s Den, Good Morning Records, and Gamit Panghiwalayan.

For Spindle Hole, collecting vinyl records is not just about the music. It’s a journey of discovery and rediscovery, literally finding new music from secret troves and exploring the rituals that accompany the music. “From the album artwork in front, the production details at the back, the inserts, the media itself and the music, [the record] contains a more complete and compelling story.”

Getting into the vinyl trade is somehow intimidating, so it’s no surprise that vinyl connoisseurs are extra enthusiastic and hopeful when they speak about it. As opposed to digital music streaming that has become too accessible, listening to vinyl records is a multi-sensory experience that has its unparalleled appeal. As long as we have front runners who keep the records playing, we’re yet to see a fully realized community of vinyl victors in the country. Now, which record should we play next?



GROOMING

MODERN MAN CAVE

This lavish men's-only grooming destination in BGC will transform you into a modern man in more ways than one.

BY HANNA SORBITO

While it's easy to paint a clear picture of how women usually spend their time for pampering, this isn't the usual case for men. Locally, it's still not easy to spot a go-to barbershop, so aside from the typical trim with free massages done by neighborhood groomers, me time for men seems to be an in-and-out affair—even a chore—that only lasts for less than an hour.

With the Barbershop Renaissance taking the world by storm, we are seeing an upgrade on how men's grooming has become more accessible and elaborate. By 2020, the grooming revolution is estimated to attain \$26B worth of global profit through selling masculinity. Hence, local establishments are also pursuing to thrive in this resurging industry.

Representing the new age of barbershops in the Philippines, The Refined stands strong at the heart of Bonifacio Global City as a perfect representation of how upscale grooming experiences for men look like in the country: fancy, exclusive, and inspired. This premium one-stop shop is generating buzz as one of the hippest grooming destinations in the metro. With their high-end catalog of “manpering” services, they exist as a man cave that redefines what makes a modern gentleman.

SOPHISTICATED STYLE

The copious choices of styling packages they offer debunk the traditional notions of how men of sophistication should look like. Serving as the backbone of The Refined's catalog, the shop's Grooming services are top-notch. With an array of basic and contemporary cuts and shaves, it's easy to achieve a clean and sleek look à la George Clooney. But if you're in it for a rowdy, un-groomed

vibe like Keanu Reeves', their master groomers know the tricks of the trade, too. They also offer exclusive fashion brands, tailored suits, shoes, and accessories, an ideal curation for the extra angas or class you're aiming for.

ACTIVE MIND, BODY, AND SOUL

There's more to making a true gent than meets the eye. The Refined's holistic approach to beauty and wellness will remind you to take the time to unplug and unwind from the daily hustles in the city. What better way to end a hectic work week than indulging in a full-body spa experience. They promise rejuvenating body massages, facials, and hand and foot treatments to ease away all your tensions and prime you for the next big thing that awaits.

CLEVER CONVERSATIONS

At the core of a truly aspirational man is his wit and way with words. The Refined is making it big by providing a dedicated bar and social

lounge, an optimal setting for professionals and entrepreneurs to build networks, do deals, and even hold networking events. If you're looking for something casual yet extra fun, why not invite your friends or business partners over for a tattoo session. Choose from their roster of local and international tattoo artists, which you can book an appointment in advance.

It takes time to build your own grooming and wellness regimen. Self-care isn't one-size-fits-all. While we witness this new era of grooming experience revolutionize and challenge our notions of the modern gentleman, we also welcome a New Age of Men—well-versed individuals who have a thirst for elegance and commanding competence. 🐰





LIFESTYLE

The holiday season is that perfect excuse to cop those overpriced goods you’ve been wanting the whole year, and not be judged about them. Check out some of the hottest pieces that you might consider purchasing shamelessly.

OFF-WHITE™ QUOTE BACKPACK

Lay off your everyday backpack, and go invest on this luxury one. Apart from the obvious of being stylish, the canvas bag can fit all your needs from day to night with its functional pockets at the sides and its main compartment.

AMU TRAVELWEAR KIMONO

Great for all types of weather conditions, this locally made unisex kimono takes pride in providing quality pieces from only the finest materials, plus, you cannot ignore the striking names of each piece.



JORDAN WHY NOT ZERO.2 SE ‘SCORPIO’

The fresh release is surely a head-turner with its striking colorway. But apart from being aesthetically pleasing, it also boasts comfort with its Zoom Air unit for dynamic cushioning and its curved heel design.

HYDRO FLASK WIDE MOUTH INSULATED STAINLESS STEEL

If you ever feel the need to work out or go to the gym in between party buffets, better suit yourself up with top-quality goods. Its double-vacuum insulation can rest-assure that it will be a great investment, and can last up to years thanks to its lifetime warranty. Sneakers to sell out fast, and go up in price even faster.



FOOD AND DRINKS

GO LOCO WITH LOCAL GOODS

Make your holidays more interesting by going local.

BY TEEJAY OBSEQUIO

Check out the cream of the crop of Filipino goods to fill your gift basket. It's time to kill the common mistaken belief that Filipino-made means compromised quality. In fact, local craft competes at a global standard for its fresh and delicately selected ingredients.

Allow the diverse Filipino flavors dance on your tongue this special time of the year. Also, wouldn't it be a more cheerful Christmas if we support our own?



ARCE DAIRY

Whatever way you want to enjoy your ice cream this holiday season – a single scoop or served in a glassful, you can never go wrong with the classic.

Arce is the go-to by Filipinos because of its local natural ingredients that give a flavor-rich experience. The fresh carabao's milk, fruits, and nuts will instantly satisfy your sweet tooth.

To complete the trip to memory lane, never forget Manila's version of vanilla—the Mantecado. The perfect balance of sweetness and milkiness of “Manila Vanilla” makes this flavor their living legacy.

Don't get confused with Arce's Avocado and Mango twins that are almost identical in their packaging. The iconic brand's two versions of Avocado and Mango ice cream, the Avocado Classic or Mango Classic and Avocado Sorbete De Caro or Mango Sorbete De Caro, differ from its milk ingredient.

Though both are worth the try, what sets the twins apart? The Classic includes fresh carabao's milk, similar to what we're accustomed to with other classic flavors. The Sorbete De Caro, meanwhile, includes coconut milk also known as gata.



FOOD AND DRINKS

AURO CHOCOLATE

Chocolates are perfect for boosting the Yuletide festivity mood. Who would have thought that chocoholics doesn't need to search far away to satisfy their cravings? Auro is best known for its thoroughly crafted and freshly resourced local ingredients.

Auro's award-winning confections are distinct in taste because it's made from the rarest and finest cacao found in Davao – the forastero, tinitatio, and criollo. The consistency of the smooth and creamy bars is the result of their straightforward bean-to-bar process. That's why despite its premium ingredients, the prices are better than its international counterpart.

The local brand values your personal preference with its wide variety of chocolates. It's hard to choose from the varying percentages of dark chocolate, white chocolate, milk chocolate, and their distinct crunchy ones with banana chips, Arabica coffee, Mango Pili, and Moringa Pinipig, but there's no regret in trying them all.

The Filipino chocolate factory's Reserve Collection, that puts the spotlight in specific areas of Southern Mindanao, is a must-try. The collection has chocolate resourced from Saloy, Mana, Regalo, Tupi, and Paquibato – each notes a varying flavor depending on its geography.



BARIK LAMBANOG

Look back on our native past and remember to include Lambanog in your holiday drinking habit.

The local brand, born from Filipino's affluent drinking culture, wanted to kill the perception that our native drink is unrefined. It intends to bring back the liquor to our drinking habit—and indeed—it did. Barik successfully brought the pre-colonial drink at hippy drinking pubs in Metro Manila. You shouldn't miss out on this one. Take time to savor the spirit to open up doors to a new drinking experience.

Barik proves that lambanog could be enjoyed at a premium with its subtle and smooth composition. You have two variants of the spirit to choose from namely: Barik Supremo Ginger Sour and Barik Supremo Puro. The former is enhanced by the sour and pungent ginger flavor; the latter is pure sap of the nipa palm's fruit.

They may have innovated the drink for the modern Filipinos, but the art and anatomy of the drink remain loyal and rooted in its pre-Spanish era days.

The Ginger Sour is perfect served chilled. The Puro, on the other hand, could be served on the rocks or as a cocktail base.





GEARBOX

As they say, 'tis the season to be splurging.
So, better check out these latest rides for your driving pleasure.



AUDI RS 5 COUPÉ

This new auto from the brand is the perfect medley of elegance and RS-performance. It boosts with an undeniable upgrade in power and efficiency due to its newly developed six-cylinder engine—and can raise the maximum speed to 280 km/h.

HARLEY-DAVIDSON 2019 FORTY-EIGHT

Make heads turn with this bad boy designed with its signature bulldog stance and 1200cc Evolution engine. Its huge 49mm front forks, adjustable rear suspension, cast aluminium wheels with floating rotors and powerful brakes will force you to hit the road the soonest, and in so much style.



MG 6

Redefine sports luxury with this car from Morris Garages. Equipped with a responsive engine of a turbocharged 1.5L, efficiency is no question, and dimensions-wise, its exterior is longer, wider, and taller than competition.

FORD MUSTANG CONVERTIBLE 2019

Nothing speaks indulgence than Ford's pride. As performance is already on its DNA (thanks to its 2.3L EcoBoost engine), this vehicle's extremely advanced technology proves that it is still unbeatable in the market both in performance and style with its custom gauge layout with three different views: normal, sport, or track.



PRIDE IS GOOD

As a brand built on conviction that all people—no matter their race, gender or sexual orientation—have an equal right to pleasure, Playboy is fiercely committed to fighting for LGBTQ rights both inside and outside the pages of the magazine. In honor of that commitment, Playboy asked six artist from the LGBTQ community to reimagine our Bunny ears with artwork that reflects what pride means to them. Proceeds from the ears—which will be available at PlayboyShop.com in June, just in time for pride month—will support 50 Bills 50 States, the Trevor Project’s initiative to ban conversion therapy in U.S. Check out this behind-the-scenes look at out call to ears and the artists leading the charge.



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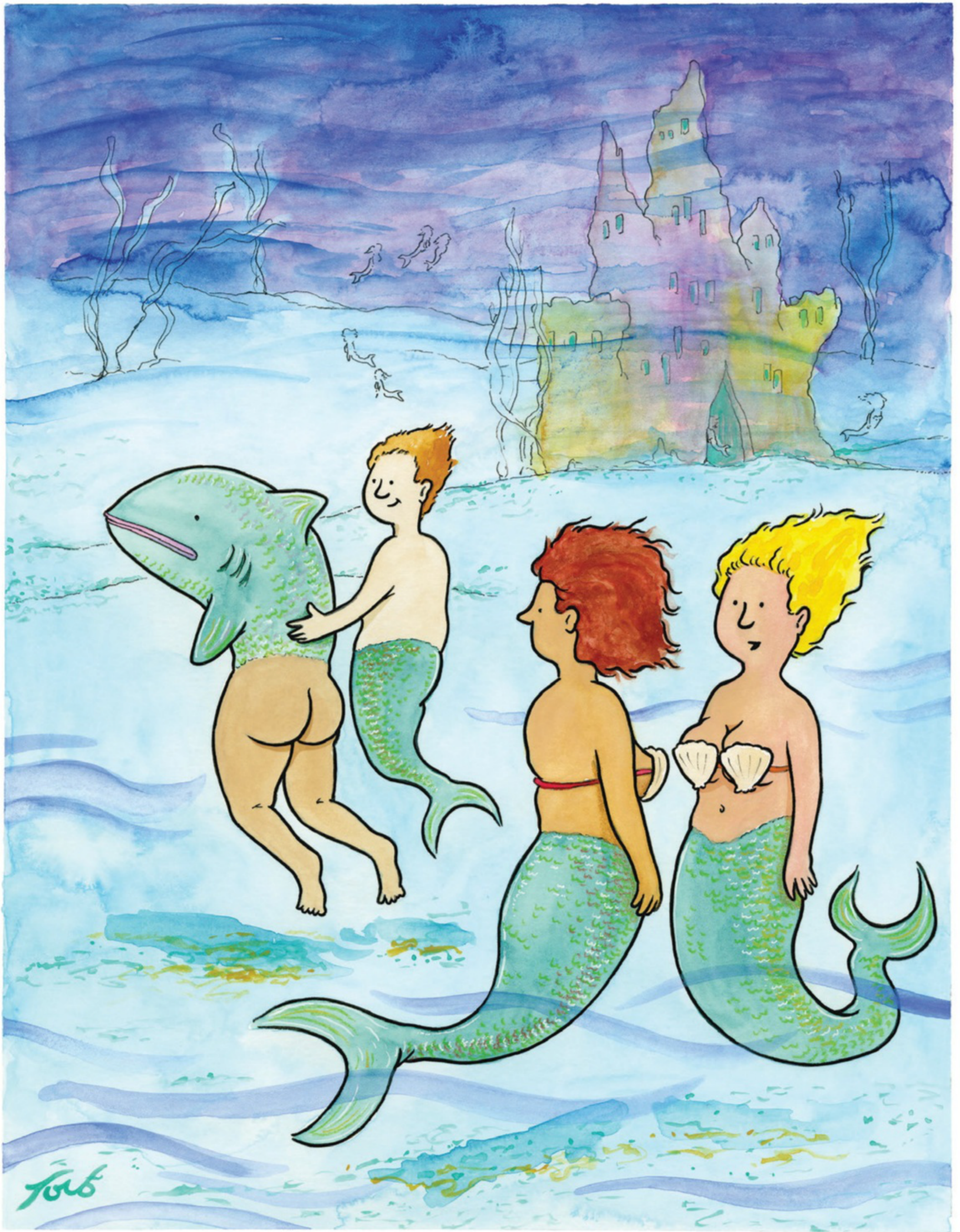
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"He's an ass man."



RAW DATA

A VERY FILIPINO CHRISTMAS

BY KIMANI FRANCO

43% of Filipinos shop for gifts in December, while **7%** starts as early as September



The country shipped **\$12.304 million** worth of Christmas decors last year



Pampanga's total export of Christmas décor in 2018 amounted to **\$24.55 million**

An estimated of **1 million** OFWs land in Manila each December to spend Christmas with their families

The Facebook 2019 Holiday study found that Filipinos ages between 18 to 34-years-old plan to spend an average of **P15,350** for Christmas shopping

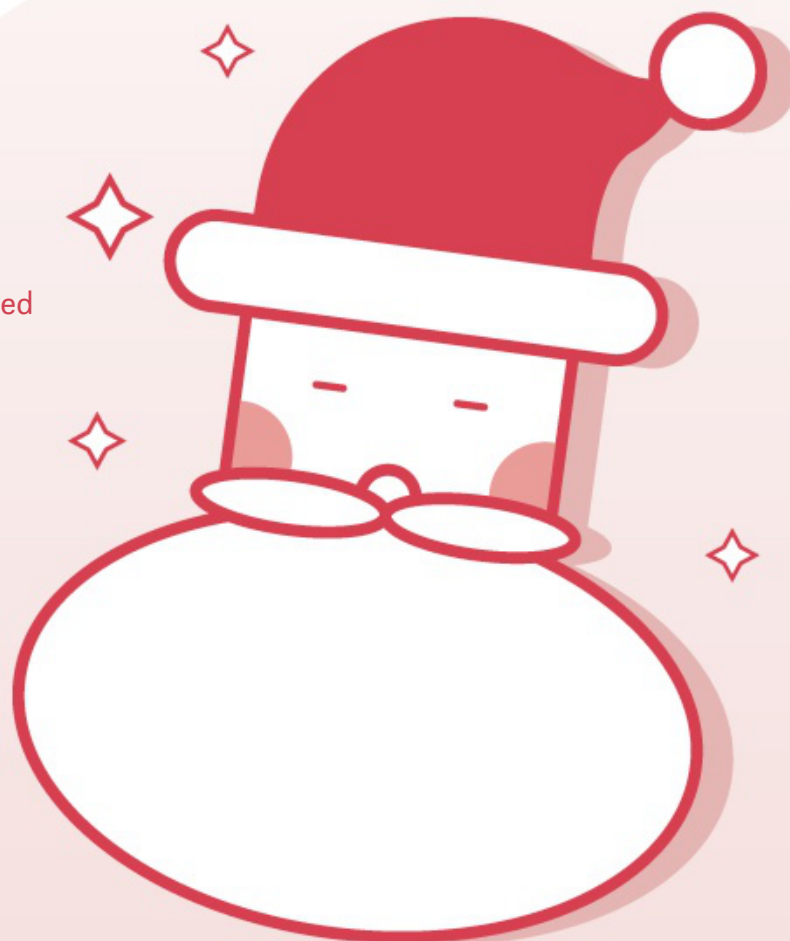


85% of Filipinos said they use their mobile phones to find gift inspiration. **73%** said they would still opt to use their phones even if they're already inside the stores



9 out of 10 shoppers were likely to purchase from businesses who can be reached through an instant messaging service

On average, a Filipino plans to spend **P16,606** for gifts this Yuletide season





HOLIDAY TIME CAN BE ME TIME

BY KIMANI FRANCO

Have you ever considered spending the holidays alone and thought to yourself, “Am I being selfish?”

In the spirit of gift-giving, the most inexpensive as well as the most valuable present you can give to yourself is relishing the opportunity to be alone on Christmas.

For a country that has the reputation of starting the Christmas festivities in September, it simply doesn't make your reasons any convincing. Plus, there's just something off in not singing along with Jose Mari Chan's iconic tune on the first day of the “ber” months.

Whether you have already decided to promise in going to your family and spend the festive season over there, here are some reasons to indulge and to convince yourself to invest some valuable quality alone time for the holidays.

Being alone is not the other word for sadness

First of all, it's a good reminder that being alone doesn't equate loneliness.

In a study headed by profes-

sors Rebecca Ratner and Rebecca Hamilton of the University of Maryland and Georgetown University, respectively—the reason others think they're lonely is how they place great importance on how others view them, in relation to being by themselves.

So, lounging around by yourself at home or enjoying going to the movies alone is everything but a display of isolation, instead a joyous time of relaxation and solitude in your own personal space.

The study also says that giv-

ing in to the stigma of fearing the negative evaluation of others, robs them of the experience from the beneficial effects of engaging in solo activities that are usually done with a companion.

Quality time by yourself leads to creativity

If you spent the entire year engrossed with your work, chances are your mental processes have gotten used to the routine of doing something systematically in a certain way. That means there's no room for meditation or some moments alone with your ideas.

Being in the refuge of your thoughts taps into the innate ability of a person's problem-solving skills. A research paper in 2003 by the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences assistant professor Christopher R. Long connected one's ability to be alone with freedom, creativity, intimacy, and spirituality.

Instead of having to conform to the standards according to your line of work, on that free day that you don't have to answer to anything, you owe it to yourself to be heard. You're unrestricted to reevaluate your life choices; or reinvigorate the emotions, which fueled the very decisions that led to where you are.

There's a reason why your high school group projects always have one person content on piggybacking off the team's success. Having the crutch of knowing someone will pick up the slack on your behalf is much more different in having all your thoughts manifested in one sitting.

The varying quality of happiness.

Countless research has already been made on how technology, more importantly, social media defied the means everyone communicates with another.

While it's all good that information is being shared effortlessly every day, the best feature of social media is also its worst. For the majority of human life, each of us had our brand of happiness. No matter what your philosophical bent is, it's agreeable that one's content is most often intimate and individualized.

The sharing aspect of the digital medium has imposed on people's psyche that there will always be another, if not, a better vision of happiness. It begs the question, "How can I tell if I'm happy if everyone else is?"

Getting to do the things that makes you happy

Your time is both valuable and of your own. In economics, scholars tend to put a value on anything—most especially the activities and decisions of every person. In Alfred Mill's *Economics 101* from *Consumer Behavior to Competitive Markets*, he refers to the benefit of a decision as marginal benefit.

It comes from the notable two-volume book of American professor Alfred E. Kahn entitled *The Economics of Regulation* (1971). Here, he measured the value of economic efficiency in 'utils', or the amount you place and receive from doing something. The concept notes that a person derives

satisfaction from an activity that provides the best return to one's happiness.

Say if you like playing video games and you assigned 200 utils for that, if someone pays you 190 utils for you to lay all day, the optimized economic decision is to do the thing you most find enjoyable—in this case, playing video games.

With the demand of daily responsibilities, the ironic growing separation of people through social media, isn't it great to have a day or two just for yourself? No doubt, spending the holidays stuffing your face with food on *noche buena*, and let's be honest, you'll probably do the same on New Year's Eve, somehow, it still feels like you have to do it. Because it's your social obligation.

Your time is barely your own every day. So, why not take the couple of days to indulge? No pending deadlines, no countless polite e-mail correspondences, and most of all, you're taking care of no one but yourself.

This Christmas, remember to extend the generosity inward.

Seek solace and discern if what you'll be doing gives you the most joy. It's easy to be rattled by the different portraits of contentment and the social expectations from everyone that you know. Nevertheless, the decision to be alone for the holidays is not an act of social withdrawal and isolation, but an opportunity to revel on the rare instance of free time.

Happy Holidays, fellow introverts! 🐼

FAIR PLAY

Business mogul Edwin Arce wins at life every single day by finding pleasure in both work and play.

STORY BY TEEJAY OBSEQUIO

PHOTOS BY WILLIAM BILL TINSAY

INTERVIEW BY APEC STA. ANA

“Ang routine na okay sa akin is work in the morning, ‘pag dating sa hapon, play golf, do boxing, play badminton. ‘Pag dating ng dinner, family time naman,” shares Edwin Arce, Vice President for Marketing of Arce Dairy, the local name behind delectable ice cream formulation that remains unchanged by time.

Edwin’s ideal routine is within his reach and some may feel envious of him. However, before he perfected this routine, he had to work while studying and gave up his dreams of pursuing sports as a career.

Arce’s family empire stayed in business because of their sacrifices and hard work in protecting what the first generation worked for, and Edwin is part of the force behind it today.

The birth of gourmet-style ice cream

Tracing back to Arce Dairy’s roots as the top carabao’s milk supplier to prominent homes, it was transformed by Doña Car-

men into an ice cream made by natural ingredients—which led to the birth of Selecta ice cream. In the 1990’s, the family sold Selecta but opted out to bring back Arce’s original recipe as Arce Dairy.

Arce family’s first generation started out with a carabao farm wherein Don Ramon, Manuel L. Quezon’s secretary, catered the farm fresh milk to the congress.

Untouched by time

Fast forward today, 84 years later, the third generation is now in charge—and quality in their products prevails.

“It’s quality always. Hindi namin pwedeng i-sacrifice yung quality for the price. So, what we do, when we make ice cream, we only use first class ingredients,” boasts Edwin.

“Maybe yung iba they just add fruit [flavorings]—kami we don’t. Kunwari mango, dudurugin mo yung mango gagawin mong ice cream. Kunwari macapuno, kakay-

urin mo yung macapuno lalagay mo sa ice cream.”

In the age of multimedia platforms, shying away from advertising could lead to the death of your business. However, it’s a different story when the products speak for itself.

“It’s all about quality ice cream. Kaya up to now we are still here. Even if we don’t advertise,” reveals the VP for Marketing.

Journey to winning

Edwin grew up with ice cream regularly served in his plate. Thus, he is no stranger to how premium quality dairy is produced.

Unlike his business-minded father, he is sports-minded. Thus, when he was younger, he dreamt of pursuing sports. It was safe to say that he was on the right track as he was juggling three sports in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) representing San Beda College (now San Beda University); namely basketball, football,

and track and field.

“Sobrang hilig ko sa sports, pero ang daddy ko pinigilan ako,” Edwin confesses.

“Kailangan namin ng kasama sa negosyo. Bakit ka magtatatakbo dyan? Ano kukunin mo gold medal?” his father said.

At an early age, the third generation Arce learned how to manage his time. He would work in the morning to extend a helping hand to the family empire, then attend school in the afternoon until the sun sets.

Evaluating his life today, Edwin’s obedience to his father seemed to have favored him, *“It’s good that I followed my dad. Kasi kung ‘di ko siguro sinunod, [‘di ko alam kung] ano ako ngayon.”*

Mixing work and play

To Edwin the secret to living a good life is balance: enjoy your work, and then play.

“Mauubos ka ‘pag puro trabaho. ‘Pag puro naman laro, mauubos ka rin,” he claims.

Alongside his position in the family business, he plays golf, badminton and boxing, and drives his motorcycle after going to the office in the morning. He recently retired from playing polo to answer his family’s clamor.

However, he justifies this as is his means to save his sanity. He sometimes thinks of turning off his phone to maximize his “me time,” but he opts not to as he might miss something big. He was forced to learn to mix business with pleasure.

He admits that he is a big spender for his toys, yet, on the opposite, is thrifty when eating out,

“Pag dating sa mga laruan ko, I spend. Halimbawa, kotse, motor, yung mga sports ko, I spend. Pero kunwari sasabihin mo, ‘kain tayo dito.” He abruptly replies, *“Wag na dyan ang mahal naman dyan.”*

“Kumbaga jinu-justify mo yung gusto mo. Tapos yung ayaw mo, ‘de mahal yan.”

His love for big bikes started at a young age in their farm. At 14 years of age, he found his love for driving cars. He even used his creativity to build his own motor cross track utilizing the equipment they

had in the farm.

The relationship with motorcycles built during his childhood faded when he had a girlfriend and later on got married. In 2016, it was reignited as his friends invited him to ride again. He bought a small bike because he wanted to get it at a cheap price, but ended up buying the bigger ones after, outlasting his purpose to save money.

His advice to those who will buy their toys: *“Bili ka na ng pinakamaganda.”* If



you’re just starting out in the game, he suggests that you buy a smaller one which is lighter to practice with.

When asked what he gets from riding his toys he quickly answered: *“Happy [ako] dun.”* To him, it’s a form of escape or a therapy to be with himself and to be himself.

“You, the road, tapos your mind is with you,” he describes. *“Hindi yung lagi kang may iniitindi. Umaalis ka don. Pumupunta ka sa kung sino [ay] ikaw. Minsan nag motor ako mag-isa. Iikot lang ako. Halim-*

bawa pupunta akong Pampanga. Para lang masaya.”

He even admits spending P1.4 million for a motorcycle.

“If you like it, mura lang sayo,” he explains.

However, he still sets limits in spending. Everything is planned and organized to a certain budget. *“Ang gagawin ko magdadala ako ng cash para ‘pag naubos, tapos na. Ako in-organize ko lahat. Pina-plano ko lahat,”* he shared.

“Kung pwede lang planuhin ko lahat pati mang-yayare sa mga anak ko. Kaya lang yung [mga] Millennials ayaw sumunod, may sarili silang plano,” he jokingly added.

To Edwin, spending money is his stress reliever. He tags it as the “nicest thing on earth.” But he does save money first.

“Nung buhay pa mommy and daddy ko, nagbibigay sila ng pera. Ang ginagawa ko tinatabi ko. Kumbaga for the rainy days. So mamaya, ‘di ko alam ang laki na pala ng natabi ko. So, ‘pag dating ko ng spending na, ang dali ko na kumuha kasi ang dami ko na pala natabi.”

When it comes to his own hard-earned money though, he is more strategic in terms of spending, *“[Pero] yung pinagtrabahuhan mo ang sakit gastusin. So, if you’re working, mas responsible enough ka, hindi mo itatapon.”*

Winning mindset

“While you’re young, gawin mo na lahat,” he tells young, aspiring entrepreneurs.

He assures that there is no regret in missing out on the fun. You will reap what you sow in the end, *“Matuwa ka kung marami kang trabaho. Magpasalamat ka kung marami kang trabaho.”*

He adds, *“Habang bata pa kayo gawin niyo na lahat ng trabaho. Once you come to my age, you want to enjoy the fruits of what you did.”*

For Edwin, there is only two options.

“If you don’t like your job, get out. If you love your job, do it right.” 📌



According to **Anand Giridharadas**, money can't fix a broken democracy when the checks are cut by the elite. Inside the journalist's unexpected calling to fix a crumbling system, one speaking gig at a time

BY **MATTHEW SHAER**

The e-mail that led to the speaking gig that led to the book deal that led to the mid-career-ish reinvention arrived in Anand Giridharadas's inbox about four years ago, at the tail end of May. The Aspen Institute, a fantastically influential (and equally deep-pocketed) think tank, was planning its annual Action Forum—a place, as the institute's website boasted, for “action-oriented leaders to come together, pause, reflect, refresh and recommit to doing their part to build a better world.” Several hundred people were expected to attend. Was Giridharadas interested in delivering the keynote address?

A former South Asia correspondent for The New York Times and the International Herald Tribune, Giridharadas had been involved with Aspen since 2011, when he was recruited as a fellow in the organization's Global Leadership Network. Many summers he flew to the foothills of the Elk Mountains to take part in days of symposia and conversations about the biggest of “big ideas.” Poverty. Inequality. Migration. War. Peace. He collected rich and powerful friends and flew with them on private jets and dined with them at cliff-top mansions.

Initially, the whole experience was invigorating. But over time, a sense of skepticism set in. Unlike many of the other fellows, Giridharadas was not a professional philanthropist. He was certainly not an entrepreneur. (“Writing, if it is a business, isn't a very good one,” he has said.) He was a journalist. His job was to question and poke holes in things. Although he admired

the charity efforts of many Aspen attendees and donors—at both the corporate and individual levels—he was unnerved by what he increasingly viewed as high-level image laundering.

“It dawned on me that at Aspen we were sitting in the Koch Brothers Building, talking about making democracy better,” he tells me. “We're talking about health, and we were doing it at events sponsored by Monsanto or Pepsi. Basically, the people who belonged to the institutions responsible for breaking the modern world were gathering each summer to talk about fixing the modern world.” The organizers of the Action Forum proposed that Giridharadas deliver an address based on his 2015 TED Talk, which was based on his second book, *The True American*, about a hate crime in Texas and the (failed) efforts of one of the surviving victims to prevent a convicted killer from being executed. Giridharadas replied: He'd be happy to give a speech. It just might not be the speech Aspen was expecting.

As Giridharadas saw it, he was presented with a golden opportunity: the chance to voice his frustration—and engage in some blunt truth-telling—in front of the very people who, in his mind, needed to hear it most.

“I remember the pope had just delivered encyclicals on climate change and on capitalism,” he tells me, “and that gave me some extra courage, you know? I figured, That guy is risking assassination for saying the most unsayable things in our civilization as a leader of the most hierarchical big organization on earth. Surely I can give my trinket of a speech in Aspen.”

In late July 2015, he took the stage at

Aspen's Paepcke Auditorium. He wore a black dress shirt, the collar unfastened. His hair was combed into his usual impressive silver crest. “I was asked to speak to you today about forgiveness,” he began. In at least one important sense, he joked, he would stay true to that topic. “After I have spoken, I will need your forgiveness.”

He then launched into one of the most spectacular, outrageous addresses ever given at an Aspen gathering—a 30-minute diatribe that New York Times columnist David Brooks, an attendee, later described as “courageous and provocative.”

“We plainly live in a new Gilded Age, in which extraordinary changes in our economies and technologies have created, as revolutionary times always do, extreme winners and extreme losers,” Giridharadas said. The winners are doing great. But the losers “are watching their lives get worse day by day—sometimes, perhaps, so that ours can get better.”

Yes, Aspen existed to address these inequities, to “build a better world,” as the language on the website professed. But only on specific terms. “I call it the Aspen Consensus,” Giridharadas explained. “The Aspen Consensus, in a nutshell, is this: The winners of our age must be challenged to do more good. But never, ever tell them to do less harm. The Aspen Consensus holds that capitalism's rough edges must be sanded and its surplus fruit shared, but the underlying system must never be questioned.”

He gave an example: a multimillion-dollar cash donation that allows “100 poor kids in the ghetto to learn how to code.” On the



one hand, what a noble gesture! On the other, was the donation really dissimilar from the papal indulgences once purchased by wealthy elites in medieval times?

“The indulgence,” Giridharadas argued, “spares you from questions about the larger systems and structures you sustain that benefit you and punish others: weak banking regulations and labor laws; zoning rules that happen to keep the poor far from your neighborhood;

porous safety nets; the enduring and unrepaired legacies of slavery and racial supremacy and caste systems.”

Near the end of the address, over rustles in the crowd, Giridharadas laid out a thesis statement. “Let’s just come out and say the thing you’re never supposed to say in Aspen: that many of the winners of our age are also contributors to the problems they bravely seek to solve. And for the greater good to prevail on any number of issues, some people will have to lose.” It did not escape the audience that the losers in that scenario were themselves. Or their closest friends. Or their family members. Or their colleagues and peers. “That moment, in retrospect, was amazing,” Giridharadas tells me, “because there was a standing ovation, there were loud cheers, but when you looked a little closer at some of the people in the crowd—their eyes! Man, their eyes. They looked like they wanted to kill me.”

Like the pope, Giridharadas had said the unsayable, and he had said it loudly. As he exited the stage, a stranger grabbed his elbow and whispered two fierce words into his ear.

“¡Que cojones!” the woman said, grinning.

...

The most effective way to critique a system is to understand it, and oftentimes the best way to understand something is to have grown up within it, to speak its language fluently. Giridharadas is very much a product of privilege. He spent his teenage years in Chevy Chase, Maryland, one of the toniest suburbs of Washington, D.C. He went to Sidwell

Friends School, the same Quaker academy attended by Chelsea Clinton and Sasha and Malia Obama. Many of his classmates came from families of those who “barnacle around official Washington: the PR people, the lobbyists, the lawyers,” he says.

Still, Giridharadas, whose mother was an art teacher and whose father was a consultant at McKinsey and an executive at Capital One, was a limit-pusher—a “flamethrower” from the start. “I was a difficult kid,” he admits. “My mom always jokes that she’s relieved I’m now taking it out on the richest and most powerful people on earth, rather than her.”

In his senior year at Sidwell, Giridharadas and a close friend, Tory Newmyer (now an economics reporter with The Washington Post), edited the school paper with “the idea that we were Woodward and Bernstein.” When they put together a feature on a cheating scandal at the school, the Sidwell administration prevented the issue from being printed.

“We pulled the story because we had to, but we printed a front page that read ‘For an explanation of why this front page is blank, turn to the editorial on page two,’ ” he recalls. “And then we wrote this editorial about censorship and free speech. Depending on your perspective, it was either extremely moving or extremely self-important and vomitous. Albert Camus was definitely quoted.”

Sidwell has a strong track record of getting its students into the Ivies, but Giridharadas had middling grades. Harvard and Columbia turned him down, as did six other top schools. His lone acceptance letter came from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where he decided to major in history with an emphasis on politics. Throughout college, he attempted to break into journalism. As a teenager he’d had an internship at The New York Times, and during his later college years he approached then Washington, D.C. bureau chief Jill Abramson, one of his mentors, for advice.

Abramson, in his recollection, suggested he “get out into the world” to give himself an education in a particular culture or discipline and use the experience to inform his reporting. It was fantastically good advice, Giridharadas tells me. “Real writing,” he says, “comes with some kind of collision with the unfamiliar. And being a kind of careerist kid in Washington wasn’t going to supply that magic.”

He worked as a consultant for McKinsey in India, the country of his parents’ birth, for a year, making about \$14,000. (“I applied for an Indian position and got an Indian salary,” he says.) Then a reporting job opened up in the India bureau of the International Herald Tribune, a paper owned by the New York Times Company. Against his expectations, he got it. Soon, he was crisscrossing India as a foreign correspondent, covering the booming economy and the ways it was transforming a society thousands of years old. That reporting became the basis of his first book, *India Calling: An Intimate Portrait of a Nation’s*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS SCHOONOVER

“HE’S OUT-SPOKEN IN A WAY THAN CAN HELP.”

Remaking, published in 2011. A few years later, back in the U.S. and working from Brooklyn as a columnist for The New York Times, he published The True American. Both were admired by critics, if not exactly universally read.

Between finishing India Calling and starting The True American, Giridharadas had briefly attended a political science doctoral program at Harvard. With his background, he knew he could find a decent job in public policy, perhaps at a think tank or in the government. He might also have simply continued writing articles and books. Then he gave his March 2015 TED Talk tied to The True American, which became a turning point.

Viewed nearly 1.5 million times, the speech, which Giridharadas delivered after working with a professional acting coach supplied by TED, reached far more people than his writing usually did. It showed him what might be possible if he moved away from being a writer sequestered at a desk to the forefront of conversation and debate.

“I would have loved to live in an era in which the writing spoke for itself and you could just do the book and drop it and go back to your cave,” he tells me. “But we don’t live in that age. A book’s a powerful tool, right? It’s also a very limited one.” If the reception to the TED Talk had surprised him, it was HELP.” Nothing compared with the reaction to his keynote address at the Action Forum four months later.

“I’ve been lucky to have a few moments in my career, three or four maybe, where I feel like I’ve written something that everybody has read,” he says. “This was one of those times.”

Two days after the Aspen address, David Brooks devoted a column to its contents. “Anand’s speech struck me as deeply patriotic in its passion and concern,” he wrote. Soon, Giridharadas had uploaded the text to Medium, where it went viral. By that time, his previous agent had gone back to publishing and he had signed with Lynn Nesbit, a legendary force in the book business who represents such superstars as Robert Caro and Joan Didion.

“I remember Lynn said, ‘This is your next book.’ I was like,

‘Maybe. I don’t know.’ And she was like, ‘Trust me. I’ve been around a long time, and the world is telling you something. This is a resonant topic. This is your next book,’ ” he says.

Nesbit was right. Released by Knopf last year, *Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World* climbed best-seller lists, selling more copies than Giridharadas’s two previous books combined. Essentially a reported version of his Aspen speech, *Winners Take All* uses encapsulated profiles to bolster its case. Bill Clinton is needled for trading an insistence that government is best equipped to level the societal playing field for an embrace of privately funded NGOs (shepherded by “world-traveling elites”). Meanwhile, Darren Walker, president of the Ford Foundation, is praised for his “taboo”-busting insistence on talking—publicly and in detail—about how the wealth of the current generation of philanthropists was made, whether through drugs (the Sacklers) or diabetes-inducing junk food.

“Are we ready to hand over our future to the elite, one supposedly world-changing initiative at a time? Are we ready to call participatory democracy a failure and to declare these other, private forms of change-making the new way forward?” Giridharadas asks. “Or is meaningful democracy, in which we all potentially have a voice, worth fighting for?”

...

In the year and change since the release of *Winners Take All*, Giridharadas has been on the road nearly constantly, speaking at book fairs and political conferences but also in venues where one would expect him to be very much unwelcome. Think Google or Harvard Business School, that bastion of big capitalism and the launching point for many a well-compensated career in consultancy. Videos of some of these engagements have become social media sensations. At Google, for example, Giridharadas suggested to his audience that it may be better for society if the internet giant were dismantled.

This spring, over lunch in Atlanta, where Giridharadas was slated to give a talk to a local philanthropic group, I wondered—

given his track record—why companies like Google keep paying him to speak to their employees.

“I’ll give you two theories,” he says, laughing. “First theory is that everyone thinks *Winners Take All* is about everyone else but them.” In other words, a bigwig at Google was comfortable having him around because said bigwig believed

Giridharadas was indicting someone else altogether, someone far more explicitly wicked. “I would bet a lot of white people reading Ta-Nehisi Coates’s book felt it was about all white people except themselves,” Giridharadas says.

Second theory: A certain subset of powerful individuals has the self-awareness to withstand a challenge. They enjoy the debate. “They see the book as a tool to look at themselves,” Giridharadas theorizes, “which is not to say they agree with me on everything. Trust me, they don’t. They typically disagree on points like the government being any kind of solution to the kinds of problems I raised. But, to the credit of many of the people I’m indicting, a bunch

of people chose to plead to the indictment and show up in court and have the proceedings.”

Winners Take All “has caused great waves in big philanthropy—this notion that some of us need to take a good look in the mirror,” the venture capitalist Freeda Kapor Klein tells me.

“Achieving real change is something Mitch [her husband] and I have been trying to do for a while, and we had such a sense of vindication reading Anand’s book,” adds Kapor Klein, who founded the nonprofit STEM education initiative SMASH. “He’s being truthful, being outspoken in a way that can really help.”

When I reach out to Craig Newmark, founder of Craigslist and head of Craig Newmark

Philanthropies, he says something

similar. *Winners Take All*, Newmark tells me over e-mail, “reminds me of my values, like ‘take less and give more,’ and that a person should measure their wealth by how much they give away.”

In recent weeks, Giridharadas, a newly minted editor at large at *Time* magazine and commentator for MSNBC and NBC News, has trained much of his attention on the upcoming presidential campaign, penning a lengthy profile of Bernie Sanders and decrying the chaotic, calamitous nature of the Trump presidency on *Morning Joe*. To Giridharadas, this kind of work is not a departure from what he set out to do in *Winners Take All* but a logical extension. The book, he tells me, “provides a good filter for viewing” the candidates seeking to oust Trump: the ones like Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, who understand that true equality will require the rich to give up more than they’d like, and the politicians like Joe Biden, who believe, as Giridharadas puts it, that “we can pull up the disadvantaged while also helping those at the top prosper even more.”

The election of a figure from the former group, he argues, could result in real change. The alternative is not encouraging. “I think what would happen is a substantial percentage of what is disastrous about this country would indeed go away,” he says. “There won’t be gulags at the border, there won’t be ‘Muslim bans.’ But all the deeper elements of the disease that made Trump possible will remain in place. Super-wealthy people will retain a monopoly on the fruits of the future, and yes, we will keep getting Trump-like figures.”

It’s getting late. Giridharadas has to change out of his T-shirt and jeans and into a suit to deliver his next reality check. By all reasonable standards, he should be exhausted. He flew from an event in England last night, and he’s flying to New York in the morning. But the prospect of today’s event seems to energize him. It brings him to life. He relishes the idea of getting back onstage and laying into the rich and powerful in front of a fresh group of listeners.

“There’s this concept, especially in the business world, that criticism itself has been discredited, that it’s not effective,” he tells me before leaving. “But criticism, I think, can be incredibly productive. It stops us from listening to the wrong people. It helps us see people we thought were prophets as crooks. And once that’s done, a whole lot becomes possible.” ▼



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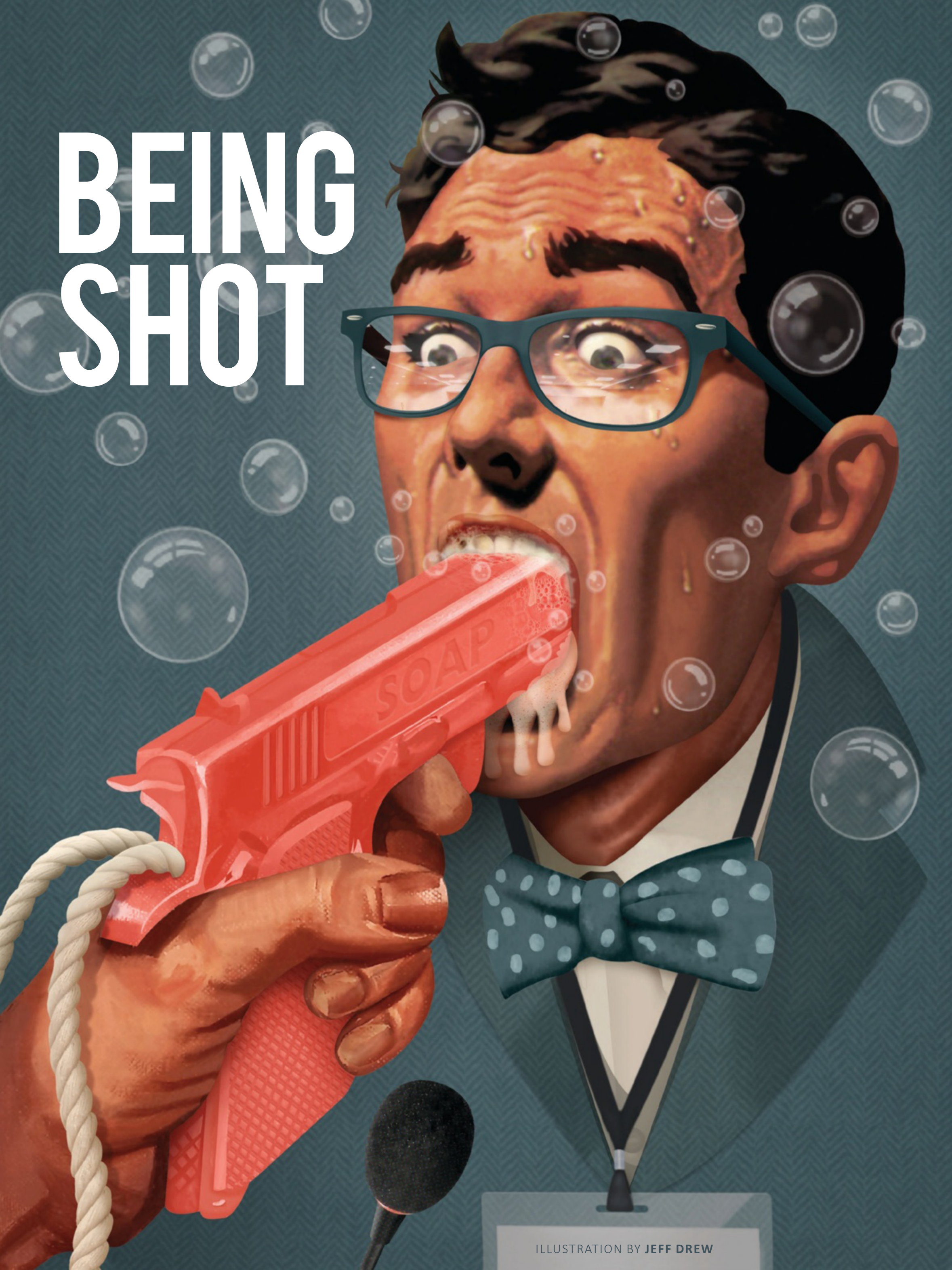


ILLUSTRATION BY JEFF DREW

WAS THE PROFESSOR
DYING OR MERELY
EXPERIENCING A NEW
KIND OF AMERICAN
DISCOURSE?

FICTION BY
**CATHERINE
LACEY**

When I was shot, I was not surprised. I'd been waiting so long to be shot. Several childhood nights I dreamt of being assassinated by the entire cast of a popular sitcom, or spent afternoons wondering which neighborhood boy could soon shoot me, and I was regularly visited by visions of the mayor or a news anchor or a row of arm-linked Rockettes pursuing me with bullets, and several times I had nightmares that both my mother and my father, each of them, one after the other, shot me in the head. I have never touched a gun—I'm simply not that sort of person—so it has long been my American fate to meet the other end of a trigger. The right to bear arms carries the obligation to bear their burden.

Just before feeling no surprise in being shot, I was, however, briefly perplexed that this long-anticipated event had happened in a particularly dispiriting hotel conference room. The folding chairs and grim lighting simply set the wrong stage—it was somehow too ordinary of a location and yet not quite ordinary enough, not ordinary in the right way. The contrast of the image was set too low. The air felt pixelated. But then, holding my gut wound, I was overcome by how the blood pooling in my hands was as luxuriously temperate as the water of a perfectly calibrated bathroom faucet in a fine-dining establishment, and it was in that moment I fell to my knees, in awe or pain, as the room filled with screams and gun smoke and the smell of burnt flesh.

Hunched over the decorative carpet—a golden floral pattern interspersed with royal green fleurs-de-lis—I struggled to recall the history of the fleurs-de-lis, but all I could remember was the symbol meant one thing in one century, then meant its opposite in the next century, and now it carried both meanings or perhaps any meaning anyone wanted for it, or perhaps it had no meaning at all. True, European history was not exactly my field, but how horrible it was to see how poorly my own brain had held on to history. Hadn't open necks sent blood rolling between Parisian cobblestones? The least I could do—yes, the very least anyone could do—was to remember.

The chintzy chandelier above me was being dismantled by gunfire, and fake plastic crystal rained on my back as I tried to mentally reassemble key dates of the French Revolution. Yet who can be counted upon to recall anything specific when bathing one's hands in such luxuriously temperate fluid, the likes of which you'll find only in the very

best fine-dining establishments? We had assembled in that hotel conference room for the annual Conference on the State of Modern Thought, a four-day invitation-only symposium organized and attended by a cadre of multidisciplinary academics, and each night we dined at the finest restaurants in that year's host city, and at the end of each decadent meal we put down our endowment-backed credit cards with a wanton satisfaction we each tried to wear casually.

More specifically, we had assembled in that hotel conference room for a much-anticipated session led by Harold Mennakin, an extremely charismatic but not entirely substantive philosopher of philosophy who was giving a lecture about how every theoretically monumental philosophical idea descended, paradoxically, from the minuscule subjective reality of one person's meaningless life. The title of the talk was "No Great Man," and I had gathered from the pamphlet's description and from a cursory understanding of Mennakin's work that he was making an ethical argument for a philosophical methodology that is self-negating and pluralistic, which interested me in theory but less, I realized, in actuality. Mennakin was in the midst of a clumsy metaphor about intellectual solipsism that involved a pressure cooker and dried beans when our assailant threw open the double doors, hoisted his guns without grace and began shooting.

To be honest, Mennakin had lost me with the bean metaphor—I hear he's a staunch vegan and perhaps his ethical diet has come at the expense of his sense of aesthetics—and though I do agree with him that it's a tragedy we so often fail to see around the corner of ourselves, I was much relieved by the sudden interruption, a relief that lasted at least until I fell to the floor, where my wound issued its seductive warmth into my hands.

Moments later, the shooter paused to deliver some remarks at the vacated podium. The shooter believed us all to be perverts and delinquents who had scammed our way into positions of academic authority, and he accused us of trying to convert the American collegiate masses to our dark and tweedy ways. "All of you should be institutionalized, removed from the mating pool, or worse," he told us, and though I did not agree with him, I had to admit that his delivery was surprisingly compelling. The shooter called us atheists, snobs, intellectuals—to which none of us would levy any objections—"and one of

THE WORD *PROBLEMATIC* HAD BEEN DEPLOYED AS IF IT WERE A POCKETKNIFE FIT FOR ANY USE.

you,” he said, “wrote a disgusting story about a dog trying to have sex with a human elbow.” And it was appalling and it had to stop and someone had to be the one to stop it. “What the fuck is wrong with you people? Who needs this stuff? Why do you want anyone to think about these things?” Then he resumed fire.

We were all professors, of course, but we were also philosophers and theorists and essayists and economists, of a sort, and though none of us would openly call ourselves artists, a scarce few of us painted or made films and there were a handful who had once or still did publish poetry or fiction in journals that ranged from vaguely available to wholeheartedly obscure. In fact, I had been the one, several months prior to the conference, who had published a poem that included the image of a dog trying to insert his penis into a slit between the speaker’s forearm and biceps, a moment that causes the speaker, a man, to empathize with all of womankind. The poem had, to that minor literary journal’s surprise, become the focal point of three days’ worth of internet debate, and in the many critical takedowns and defenses of the poem, the word *problematic* had been deployed as if it were a pocketknife fit for any use. As a result, I’d been invited to this year’s Conference on the State of Modern Thought to give a lecture on the problematic nature of the contemporary use of the word *problematic*.

Lisa Kindalee, however, one of the staunchest critics of that poem’s very existence (not to mention its publication), had also been invited to this year’s conference to give a competing lecture on the revolutionary nature of the use of the word *problematic* over the past decade of public discourse. To make matters worse,

our lectures had been scheduled to happen concurrently, forcing any potential attendee to choose a side before even hearing the arguments in a debate that was not necessarily as diametrically opposed as the session titles made it seem.

I’ve always been uncomfortable with conflict and competition of any sort, a skittish disposition that was partly what led me into academia in the first place. I’ve always had an aversion to games and sports, despite possessing a somewhat hefty phy-

sique. At a young age I longed to be a history professor, because history made me cry in a way that felt historical, as if I were crying tears that belonged to the dead, as if that sorrow won me an esteemed place in the world, and even as a child I disliked that platitude about history repeating itself, not because it wasn’t true—it was and still is, in a way—but because that phrase had been repeated so often that it had become itself, and by becoming itself it had become invisible, a repetition of a copy of a thought, a vacant cheer from the sidelines of a history one is excused from ever knowing because one is actively living through its equally unimportant sequel, as if all years merely slipped from a machine that made years.

But there I was on the floor of a hotel conference room, a Xerox of an American history, bleeding into the fleurs-de-lis. Another plastic jewel fell from the battered chandelier and landed on my shoulder as gently as a tapping finger—excuse me, sir.

The shooter, I’m told, made no rush on his way through the lobby and was tackled, without resisting, by a frenzied security guard, and only then was it revealed that all his guns had been made of 3-D-printed plastic and all the bullets were a sort of rubber semi-explosive filled with an indeterminate molten substance. All our wounds were superficial and every last one of us survived, which means this story can be read without sacrificing a moment of anyone’s sincere pleasure in the languid unwinding of late capitalism.

Still—we were all sent to the hospital as a precaution. There was a concern that we may have been exposed to a chemical weapon or merely traumatized or perhaps our superficial wounds were more complex than they first seemed, prone to infection, prone to litigation. As I raised myself from the hotel carpet I realized the pleasant warmth I’d felt in my hands had not been my own beautiful blood but some strange syrupy substance, faintly neon red, perfumed with gunpowder and death. How, I wondered, had this substance been able to maintain such a consistently pleasing temperature, that expertly calibrated blend of hot and cold?

Prior to the shooting, everyone had spent their free time between lectures trying to curry each other's favor for hypothetical favors that might later be needed or given, and a minority among the group took this exercise into the realm of extramarital affairs—though most of those affairs seem to have been experienced only in the abstract and only a very small number were ever concretized—but for the most part the conference is just a way for a group of people to use their obscure interests as a path toward people who might pay them some attention. That's all it ever really is.

After the shooting, however, the entire conference was moved, first unofficially, then officially, to the hospital. A psychologist-philosopher began giving a speech in the waiting room about how the shooting had pulled back a curtain on each of our truest identities; seen that way, it was a kind of gift. When the shots began, some of us had panicked and fled the room, stepping over bodies and pushing past each other, while others had remained supine in our chairs, our latent suicidal tendencies laid bare. Some had thrown themselves over the bodies of those with whom they'd been engaged or merely trying to begin affairs, preferring to usher our spouses into widowhood rather than become a person who has seen their lover, whether imagined or actual, die.

I was assigned a hospital room with many other semi-injured. A nursing student punctured me with an injection needle in several places on both my arms before she finally administered some kind of medication that made me weep and tremble. "Don't worry," she kept saying, as other nurses and academics paced in and out of this room's many doors. "Don't worry." A woman walked the length of the room, from one door to another, with her cell phone ringing some melodic tune several times before the nursing student finally finished her task, my arms a smear of rubbing alcohol and blood and half-stuck bandages.

By then the hospital room had filled with conference-goers and someone had installed himself atop a chair in the corner of the room and begun an impromptu lecture on how no belief is meaningful until it is translated into action. I recognized this as a repurposed version of a talk he was already scheduled to give, about how the two primary problems of the internet were that it created the illusion that digital speech was equivalent to action and that it upheld the illusion that any statement can ever be completely sincere or altruistic—proclamations never occur in a vacuum. The updated form of this lecture posited that, at the very least, the shooter's sincere objection to our works and worldviews—despite being unfounded and logically inconsistent—had led him to action, and when the shooter enacted his beliefs by "shooting" us, he had revealed a dark truth about our beloved Conference on the State of Modern Thought, which is that most of those who participate in it have blindly accepted this lie of the paralysis of the Individual in the Information Age.

As I listened to this lecture I had to turn sideways and fetal on the hospital cot, as it was simply not large enough for me as I am a very large man. I clutched my bruised belly and cried my historical tears, trembling as I was held hostage to whatever drug was flowing in my bloodstream, calling all the shots within my body.

It was then the president of the Conference on the State of Modern Thought knelt beside me to say that my lecture had to be canceled as it had been rendered obsolete by recent events, but when I asked him if Lisa Kindalee's lecture had also been

canceled, he just said the story was still unfolding, that new lines of thinking were already being drawn, that I would soon have the opportunity to reapply for next year's conference and he would personally ensure that my application was given full consideration by the committee, and with that the president was gone.

Then a young woman I'd never seen before sat beside me and she looked down at me with a gaze somewhere between somber and sexual. "Are you the one who wrote the poem about the dog trying to fuck the crook of someone's elbow?" I nodded. "I scanned it," she said, and—foolish me—I thought that meant she wanted to discuss my complicated system of mirrored trochees and iambs, a poetic feat that no one ever mentioned in the poem's ensuing controversy, but she hadn't meant that at all. She inserted three fingers into the crook of my elbow, right at the spot where the injection had finally taken, and I wanted to tell her that even though the poem contained the image of a dog trying to fuck the crook of someone's elbow, that didn't mean the poem was about a dog trying to fuck the crook of someone's elbow. That was the thing about art, wasn't it? That the apparent subject concealed the true object? I wasn't sure of anything anymore, I thought, or maybe that's just what the medication wanted me to think. Was I speaking? Was the room spinning? How much of the thing I called my life had been imaginary? The girl skipped away from the cot's edge, and I recalled, for some unknown reason, how utterly modern it was that the neighborhood boys of my childhood were so intent on playing a game called War all summer, though none of them, to my knowledge, ever joined an actual army.

Then, moved by a mysterious neurochemical or moved by some holy spirit of the academic, I stood on my cot and launched into a sermon about a revelation I'd just had: Poetry—sweet Jesus, poetry!—was still alive in America! Had the shooter not been stirred by a poetic creation of carefully calibrated trochees and iambs into action? Had the shooter not been changed by a mere and mighty poem and translated this personal transformation into a physical gesture, a performance, an elaborate gesture meant to elaborate on his thoughts on that poem? It was true (wasn't it true?) that poetry still held real power! Yes, no matter how battered and ignored poetry had become in this era, it still held the power to change the course of history!

I'd become so dizzy over poetry and history that I had to slide back down into a fetal position on the cot, and in my half-sleep I thought I heard someone saying that the shooting had in fact been a work of performance art, and someone else said that the shooter was no less of a monster for being an artist, and someone else argued that true art should have the freedom to do harm, and someone else suggested a New American restaurant with an extensive cocktail list, and someone else argued that just because you call yourself an artist doesn't mean you aren't also a sociopath.

But who are we to diagnose anyone? That's not our field, not really. In our hearts, I think, we just want to be good people who are kind to other good people. We get flu shots for the sake of public health. We read the manuals on workplace harassments and racisms and sexism very carefully, with somber, serious gazes. And before we leave any washroom, we wash our hands for a full 20 seconds with plenty of soap and attention to the nail beds and cuticles, and we relish the way the water feels as thick and warm as the blood of any human, of any living human at all. 🍷



PICTORIAL FEATURE



WORDS BY

NICOLO MANALOTO

MAKEUP BY

MICKO CEQUEÑA SANGKAL

STYLED BY

OLIE PABUSTAN

SHOT ON LOCATION AT

SAFARI HOTEL & VILLAS

VIGAN CITY, ILOCOS SUR

PHOTOGRAPHY BY

OWEN REYES

THE FEISTY

Jessa Masarita

PMOY 2019 CANDIDATE JESSA MASARITA IS ONE TOUGH BUNNY, AND SHE OWES
HER RESILIENCE TO HER TIME GROWING UP IN THE PROVINCE.

Growing up in the province and striking it on her own made her much stronger, but it's also the fact that she was the black sheep in her family that made her even more confident.

"I was raised in a setting where values are very important. However, I would consider myself a modern Filipina ever since. Not really proud of it but I was the black sheep of the family and I would really go an extra mile just to go my way every time. But it's all worth it," she said.

Thanks to her experiences growing up, Jessa proved that she had what it takes in the road to PMOY 2019, after all the journey proved to be quite a challenge, especially the Mock Elections. For Jessa, not having much connections in Manila was tough, but she made it work, so much so that she believes she's the best representation of Playboy.

"I am both work and play. And that best represents the brand. It's not about the votes; it's not about the products you sell; it's not just about the copies you give to everyone; it's about the embodiment of what this company represents. I am Playboy Philippines." 📌







"Being raised in a province honed me into being resilient. But also humble at the same time. And I think that's the reason I stand out among [the candidates]."





PICTORIAL FEATURE



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MAY BALTAZAR ALMAZAN

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SHOT ON LOCATION AT

SAFARI HOTEL & VILLAS

VIGAN CITY, ILOCOS SUR

PHOTOGRAPHY BY

OWEN REYES

THE EFFERVESCENT

Kate Gonzales

PMOY 2019 CANDIDATE KATE GONZALES TRANSFORMED HERSELF
AND BLOOMED INTO ONE SEXY, REFINED WOMAN.



Growing up, she was quite the chubby kid. Kate was often bullied because of her weight. Though instead of beating herself up because of it, Kate did a strict diet for a year to turn everything around.

What's great about Kate's transformation is that it didn't end with her just attaining a killer bod; her weight loss even inspired others, so much so that body positivity has become one of her biggest advocacies.

"When I slimmed down, many wanted to follow my journey. For me, it starts with you, if you're confident with what you are then go for it, as long as you're healthy. But if you want to [slim down] there's a way. It's all in the mind."

Right now, it's fair to say that Kate embodies the Playmate sexiness looks-wise. What's funny though

is that her personality isn't exactly a smoldering vixen—instead, Kate describes herself as "super friendly, bubbly, spontaneous, and happy-go-lucky."

This bubbly personality of hers was what she always was, even back when she was a kid.

Unlike other Playmates, Kate didn't even dream of becoming a model. That all changed when she went back to the Philippines after studying in Dubai. Kate found herself drawn to modelling, starting her journey toward becoming a Playmate.

Now a full-fledged Playmate, Kate believes that she has what it takes to become the PMOY for 2019 thanks to a combination of her strong advocacy, upbeat personality, and social media savvy. Becoming PMOY is a big boost to her career for sure, but that's not the only thing driving her to succeed.

"When you are crowned PMOY, you have that voice to influence others in a big way. Whatever you say, people will take it to heart." ❧





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NIGHTS IN ERBIL





IN THE HEART OF A REGION
THAT FACES AGGRESSION
FROM ALL SIDES, THE PURSUIT
OF PLEASURE CAN BE DEATH-
DEFYING. HERE'S HOW A
HANDFUL OF LOCALS DO IT—
FROM ROOFTOP BARS TO THE
UNDERGROUND DRAG SCENE

BY **KEVIN KNODELL**

In Erbil, the capital of Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdish region, even locals admit that the summer heat is a kind you never really get used to. People go out only if they have to for work, sweating as the sun beats down through a pale blue sky. On the hottest days the breeze feels like a hair dryer blowing in your face.

But as the sun begins to set, the city comes to life. Families and children make their way out into the streets and the parks. Old men break out cards and dice, tea sets and shisha (water pipes better known to Westerners as hookahs). Kebab and fruit stands appear on the sidewalks and in the streets.

As the darkness spreads, young people congregate. From street corners you can catch glimpses of young women applying their makeup. Soon enough, the streets get louder and more kinetic. Despite being situated in a deeply conservative—and sometimes volatile—region, this city of roughly 880,000 is known for its bars and nightclubs.

At White Erbil, a rooftop bar above a hotel overlooking the city, a DJ cranks M.O.P.'s "Ante Up" as patrons lounge around a pool. To enter, you first have to get past an armed security detail of men in black military-style uniforms adorned with Kurdish flags. On the roof, local club goers and Western aid workers down beers and cocktails as the pool glows and soft lights illuminate the space.

One of the Westerners is an Iraqi American woman who grew up in northern California after Saddam Hussein's regime cracked down on southern Shia communities and turned her family into refugees. She returned to Iraq a year ago to work with Iraqis and Syrians displaced by the most recent waves of conflict. Dressed in a traditional Arab dress and drinking a gin and tonic, she's debating whether a speakeasy could be successful in Erbil. Kurds and Arabs wouldn't embrace a small, quiet nightlife space, she says, though she concedes that marketing it as an exclusive venue might draw interest. "Iraqis do love the VIP thing," she says.

Then the lights go out and the music stops. Erbil's power grid is a ramshackle patchwork of generators that frequently fail, especially during the summer. But after a quick laugh, patrons go on chatting and drinking as though nothing has happened.

"Welcome to Kurdistan," a fellow patron says with a chuckle.

...

Iraqi Kurdistan is surrounded by countries and groups that oppose its autonomy and occasionally bomb its population. Its people have survived displacement and genocide. That gives every moment special meaning as they pursue life's pleasures—both the simple and the forbidden.



When Western powers carved up borders in the modern Middle East after World War I, the Kurds were not a priority. Today as many as 45 million Kurdish people are spread across Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Iran and the sizable diaspora that exists in the West. They're widely considered the world's largest cultural and linguistic group without a country of its own.

A mountain people, the Kurds are mostly Sunni Muslims. With borders dividing them and few friends, they've faced repression from regional governments for generations. Their homeland's topography has given them refuge from the armies that at various times have tried to kill or subjugate them—hence the Kurdish saying “No friends but the mountains.”

From the south, Saddam Hussein subjected the Kurds to genocidal campaigns that included what has been described as history's

largest chemical-weapons attack against a civilian

population. Iraq's Kurds have also fought among themselves: The brutal Kurdish civil war of the 1990s pitted the Kurdistan Democratic Party against the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the two dominant parties in the Kurdish government today. But the establishment of an American-led-military-enforced safe zone, increasing foreign investment and a booming oil industry all came together to allow Iraqi Kurdish cities to grow and prosper, resulting in a stability that has eluded other areas in the region.

This haven for its namesake population is surprisingly diverse: Kurds make up a firm majority in Kurdistan, but it's also home to long-established communities of Arabs, Chaldean and Assyrian Christians, Turkmens and Yazidis—and more recently a hodge-podge of immigrant workers and expats.

Of the Kurdish cities that have flourished since the first Gulf War, perhaps none has grown as much as Erbil. It comprises several neighborhoods that serve as rough nerve centers



for various groups—notably the Christian enclave of Ankawa—but the borders are fuzzy, and communities tend to intermingle and spread out. Iranians regularly cross the border for work and leisure, taking advantage of laws that allow them to drink and dress much less conservatively than at home.

In coffee shops and cafés, people sip tea and smoke shisha. Live music colors the evening air, a mix of traditional fare and more Westernized offerings that regularly overlap in beguiling ways. There are salsa nights, a jazz club, burgeoning rooftop bars and lots of outdoor patios designed for the hot summer nights. There are also fancy restaurants that cater to wining-and-dining businessmen, diplomats and Western aid workers charging the bills to their organizations' expense accounts.

"It can get crazy," says Viyan, a young Kurdish woman with long curly hair and pale green eyes. She's wearing a low-cut floral sundress and sipping a Mexican beer at Dusk, a crowded rooftop bar aglow with moody orange lighting. Local art decorates the walls, along with more international influences and pop art. At one table a woman in a pink hijab—the only person in the room wearing one—sits smoking shisha at a table shared by much less modestly dressed patrons drinking booze.

Erbil's bar scene is diverse, but the number of alcohol-serving establishments is limited. That means each venue can draw large crowds. Drinks can be expensive and lines can be long. Viyan explains that young locals often drink before heading out to a bar—or even on the way. "Sometimes we mix cocktails in the back of the car while we're driving to the bar," she says.

The Middle East is both less and more puritanical than many Westerners under-

stand. The cultural and historical dynamics are rife with nuance: When the United States government officially put alcohol prohibition into effect in the 1920s, some Iraqi newspapers ran editorials expressing bafflement and condemnation of Americans' embrace of a policy that denied their fellow countrymen the long-accepted delights of spirits.

Although conservative movements have since become much more entrenched and powerful in the country, when the Iraqi parliament attempted to pass an alcohol ban in 2016, Iraqis forcefully opposed it. "If they had banned alcohol, everyone would have started doing drugs," one Iraqi Christian woman living in Erbil says—though she concedes that there's already a fair amount of drug use in Kurdistan. She says party drugs like ecstasy and cocaine aren't hard to get, but hashish is by far the most popular, even if no one admits it: "Everyone I know smokes hashish."

Still, Kurdistan remains a land very much steeped in tradition. At its best, honor motivates people to remain honest and fair in business transactions and in personal relationships so as not to bring shame upon family, tribe or community. At its worst, honor can be used to justify violence and repression. "Immoral" behavior such as sex outside marriage or even dating without the approval of one's family can result in steep punishments—including "honor killings" of those deemed to have insulted the family or tribe.

Needless to say, the region's LGBTQ community is distinctly challenged by local tradition.

...

"In my tribe, everything is dishonorable," says Dante, a Kurdish college student and budding fashion designer who comes from a deeply religious and particularly traditional tribe. We meet at a café beneath Erbil's upscale Park View

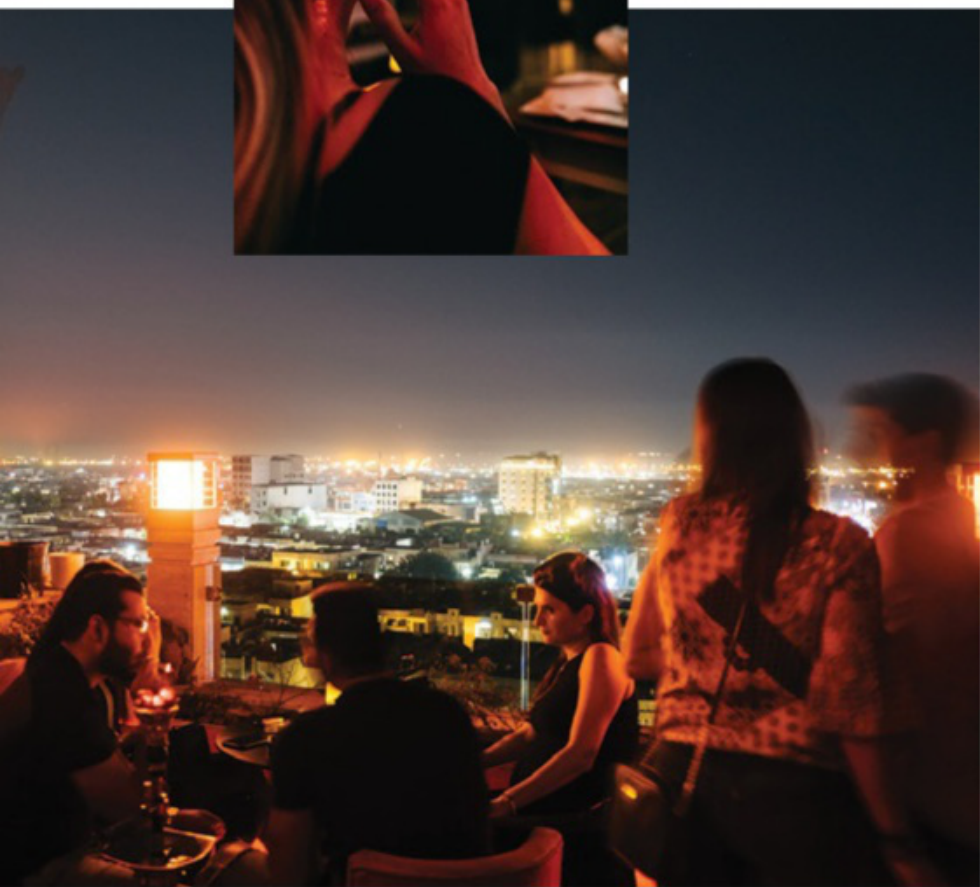
apartments. Dante wears a bandanna and

a colorful patterned shirt unbuttoned to show off a silver pendant. He explains it was difficult for him when he reached his sexual awakening and realized he was gay. "There were definitely points when I resented myself for it, but I came to realize there was nothing wrong about it," he says. "I wasn't hurting anyone."

Dante grew up in Duhok, a city bordered by Kurdistan's idyllic mountains and close to hiking trails that attract tourists from all

"You have a mix of mercenaries and people who have survived the most extraordinary hardships. They've found a common culture here."





across Iraq. “It’s a very conservative place,” he says of his hometown. “The infrastructure there has gotten more modern, but the ideology hasn’t changed much. People there fear change.” He longed to go to Erbil, but when he arrived for college he was at first overwhelmed by the city’s diversity.

That changed once he found his community. Today Dante is involved in the drag scene and, increasingly, LGBTQ organizing efforts. Although he’s aware that there are people in Erbil who disapprove of homosexuality, he says they don’t care enough to cause problems for the gay population. “People just don’t mind you here,” he explains. “They’re focused on their own lives.”

Dante has been designing clothes for a year and a half, fueled by a quiet but potent ambition: “I kind of want to break barriers here in Kurdistan.” He says his family has yet to accept his passion for fashion design—let alone his sexuality. He’s out to his friends but still absolutely not out to his family. He lives a double life, switching between Erbil and Duhok modes. “It really splits you in half,” he says.

Kurdish women face their own challenges, especially those who live public lives. On September 27, 2018, a group of unknown gunmen killed Iraqi Arab model and social-media star Tara Fares as she drove her convertible in Baghdad. Fares, who split her time between Erbil and Baghdad, was one of Iraq’s most popular internet personalities; she was deeply controversial for speaking openly about her divorce after an arranged teenage

marriage and for displaying a fashion sense that her critics deemed sinful. Although her lifestyle brought her condemnation, several Iraqi women living in Erbil tell *PLAYBOY* it was likely Fares’s increasingly outspoken criticism of conservative religious clerics that led to her death.

Fares’s was the most high profile of several murders of female celebrities and activists in Iraq last year—along with countless nonfatal attacks. Not long after Fares’s death, Kurdish model Jehan Hashim announced that she feared for her safety and was leaving Kurdistan, telling her followers on Instagram, “I love my country and I hope to see change when I get back, good-bye Erbil.”

That sort of danger means Erbil’s bars and clubs tend to be very male spaces. Yet despite the social and physical risks, young women haven’t stopped challenging tradition and pushing boundaries. Viyan says that in a way she has taken advantage of—and even sort of enjoys—the lopsided gender representation in the city’s nightlife. “To be honest, I like looking at men, and I like having them look at me,” she says with a mischievous grin. It allows her to stand out in the crowd as a woman who dares to assert control over her sexuality.

Viyan explains that the women who venture into nightlife spaces have typically been Westerners working for international NGOs, local Chaldeans and Assyrians or particularly adventurous women from Iran. But, she adds, that’s changing fast. “There are a lot more girls out here than there used to be, especially Kurdish ones,” she says.

Others have noticed a shift too.

“Even four years ago, you just didn’t see women going out and smoking shisha like now—forget about drinking. And the skirts are getting shorter,” says one young Chaldean man visiting home from studying in the West. He adds that young men and women of all groups seem to be getting bolder in their pursuit of pleasure: “Coming back to visit, it almost seems like a different country. Kurdistan has changed.”

...

American troops and contractors occasionally make their way out to bars and clubs, much to the chagrin of American officials presumably fearing unwanted attention. Last New Year’s Eve, two U.S. marines and one Navy corpsman reportedly brawled with a Green Beret turned contractor outside an Erbil bar and are now being investigated in his death.

“To me, this bar is on Tatooine,” says Matt, a scruffy American tech contractor who wears his silver hair tied in a ponytail. We talk as he pounds a drink at Ankawa’s T-Bar, a rowdy sports pub. Most of the servers are young Filipina women (workers with roots in the Philippines, Bangladesh and other nations to the East are common here) and the crowd is a mix of locals, Western aid workers and

contractors. An American flag hangs in the far corner. Matt came to Iraq eight years ago on a contract in the southern city of Basra and eventually moved north to Kurdistan. He has since traveled the region extensively and has an Iranian girlfriend.

Kurdistan's cultural complexities—and long-standing tensions— are never far from the surface in Erbil's bars and clubs. Most of the venues have armed security details, occasionally manned by battle-hardened ex-militiamen who have fought against the Iraqi army, ISIS and others. Some have a reputation for harassing or denying entry to members of other ethnic and religious groups. Erbil isn't a war zone, but it is surrounded by war. There's hardly a single person living here whose life hasn't been touched by violence in some way.

When ISIS invaded Mosul in 2014, the Kurdish region was flooded with displaced people, adding to the already large number of refugees who had come from Syria. ISIS forces also invaded several Kurdish towns—coming close to Erbil itself—and waged genocidal campaigns against Yazidis and Christians. In 2017 the Kurdish government held a referendum on declaring independence from Iraq, leading to a brief military conflict between the Peshmerga (the region's de facto military) and the Iraqi army that resulted in casualties on both sides. Some Arab residents of Erbil reported facing harassment and even assaults from friends and neighbors during these conflicts, as well as lingering resentment long after.

And yet Erbil enjoys relative stability, which, combined with its proximity to combat zones, makes it an ideal place for foreign militaries to set up shop—and their presence is evident. The Kurdish government in Erbil is considered a key American ally, and the Peshmerga have received arms and training from the U.S. military since the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The roar of coalition helicopters flying overhead is almost background noise, and military contractors coming and going are a common sight at Erbil International Airport.

"It's a strange place where you have a mix of mercenaries and people who have survived the most extraordinary hardships," says Matt. "They've found a common culture here, and what they have in common is that they feel comfortable at the edge of the world."

...

Kurdistan is in a constant state of change as its internal cultures and neighboring nations clash. Western politicians, academics and pundits have projected their own hopes, fears and values onto the region. But the people who call it home have to struggle to figure out what these changes mean for themselves and the people they care about—and how they'll go about their own lives and write

their own stories.

"I know this double life will end someday," Dante says. He explains that he won't be able to hide his sexual orientation from his family forever—nor does he want to. And when the day comes, his family will have to either accept him or not. He says he's prepared to live his life without them if that's what it takes. But in a society that values family ties and honor and has yet to truly accept people like him, that could be a challenge.

In February a Kurdish LGBTQ activist tweeted at Kurdish deputy prime minister Qubad Talabani, challenging him on his beliefs about whether queer people in Kurdistan deserve equal rights and asking what, if anything, he had done to support them. "I believe all citizens, regardless of

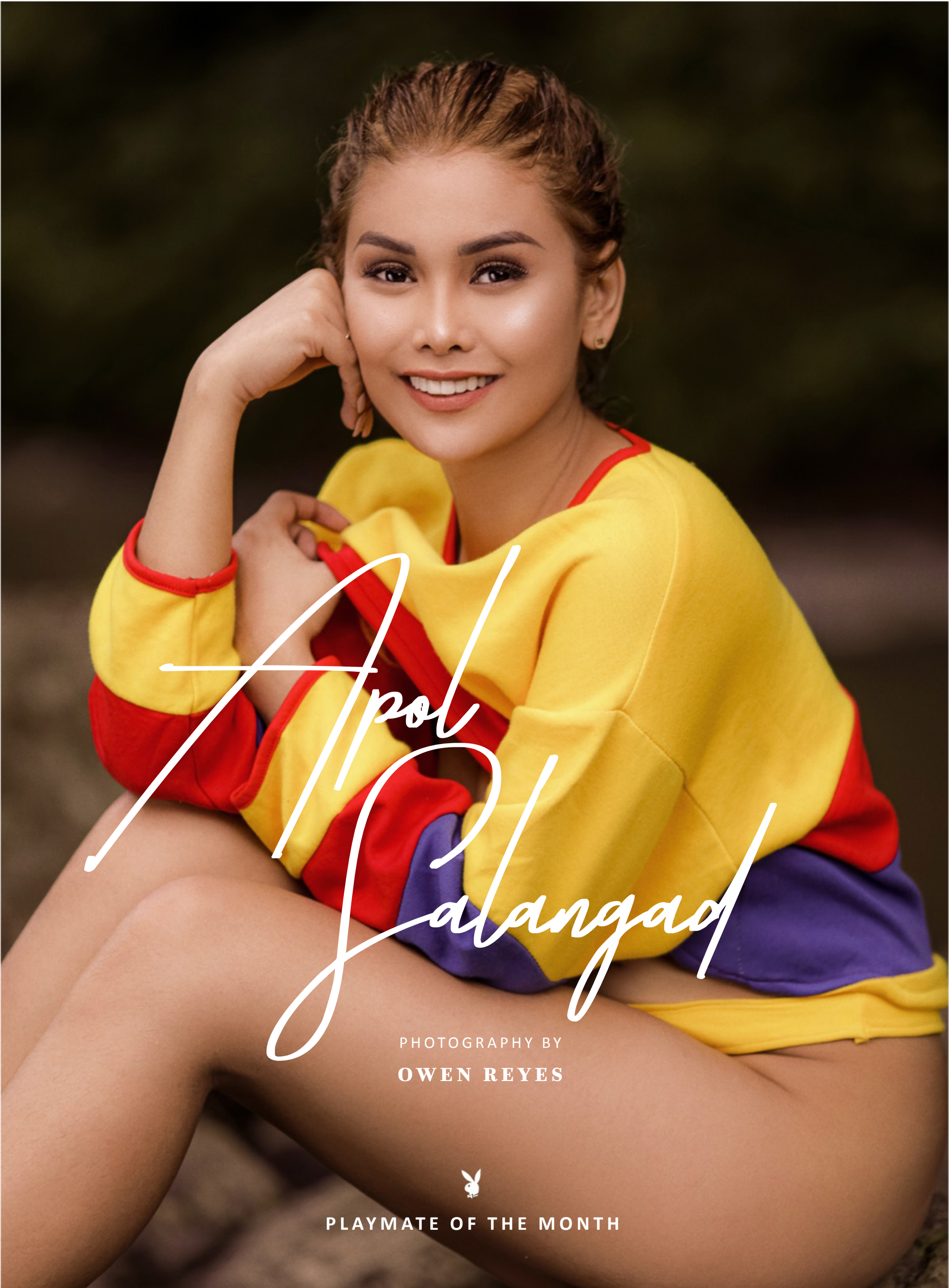
race, religion, gender (and or gender preference), ethnic identity and sexual preference deserve equal rights, all over the world, and especially in Kurdistan," Talabani responded. His tweet sent a stir across the region.

Dante says he knows politicians' words can be flowery and their promises fickle, and he's not so naive as to think anything is guaranteed. But the fact that anyone in a position of authority anywhere in the Middle East would make such a statement, openly and publicly, matters to him. Dante's response echoes the stirrings of countless denizens of this beautiful and complicated city:

"He gave me hope that this place can change." ▼

Editor's note: Names have been changed for the sake of anonymity and safety.





Apol Salanga

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
OWEN REYES



PLAYMATE OF THE MONTH

**SWEET AND JUICY, APOL SALANGAD IS HERE TO KEEP OUR
NOVEMBER INTERESTING ENOUGH.**



STORY BY
NOR SANTOS
MAKEUP BY
MICKO CEQUEÑA SANGKAL
STYLING BY
OLIE PABUSTAN



It's hard to believe that at 26 years old, our Miss November has already achieved so many things. With such a sweet face, "Pol" as intimately called by her family and friends stands at 5'4" tall. Surprisingly, she has been in the modelling industry for seven years already.

She took up Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management in Far Eastern University but unfortunately did not finish and only studied for two years. Miss November's hobbies are watching movies, going to the mall and shopping. Her hidden talent is singing and in fact, she even used to sing in church before. She is a homebody and her typical day is usually spent at home. Pol's ambition in life is to own a business, her own house, a car, and of course, have her very own family.

Apol describes herself as tall, morena, someone who always smiles, has beautiful eyes and has a strong sex appeal. What makes Miss November a unique woman is that she is a spring of positivity and liveliness. There are people that misunderstand what it means to be a positive person. Some seem to think it means that you say nothing negative, think nothing negative and basically live in denial of all difficult circumstances in life. It's just that she hates it when someone around feels sad. She goes all out to keep people happy no matter what.

In her seven years in modelling, she started out in gown ex-deals. Then, she started showing up in car shows and bikini

shows. Then, finally landed stints in magazines and is now an endorser in YouTube. Ever since she was a child, Miss November has dreamt of being a Playmate. She has visualized herself to becoming known all over the world. That's why her favorite thing about being a Playmate is having many doors of opportunities open for her.

For Miss November, what makes a woman sexy is always being happy. Resiliency despite struggles can keep a woman confident and confidence is sexy. On the other hand, men are sexy when they are gentlemanly and neat. In today's modern age of the selfie and dating apps where you can dial up sex with a swipe of the finger, romance is under siege. But with this new sexual revolution in full swing, one thing has become clear: there is nothing sexier than a well-mannered man. Which is why for Apol, she can be friends with a Playboy, she can date a Playboy but she will not be in a relationship with a Playboy.

Pol's ideal guy is someone who is well-mannered, sweet, happy-go-lucky, patient, and neighborly. What turns her off is a guy who burdens her with sudden decisions. Her ideal romantic evening is a simple dinner outside in a classic restaurant. Miss November thinks that the sexiest part of her body are her boobs and eyes. While for men, she finds the butt the sexiest. Apol advises men to introduce themselves sincerely to women, let them get to know them deeper in order to be attractive to women. 📌







Ever since she was a child, Miss November has dreamt of being a Playmate. She has visualized herself to becoming known all over the world.









THE
pleasure
OF NOT BEING RESPECTABLE

ON THE BLACK EXPERIENCE OF JOY AND INDULGENCE AND NOT GIVING A FUCK

BY **JELANI COBB**

Somewhere in the sprawling mythos that was his life, John Arthur Johnson—a.k.a. the Galveston Giant, a.k.a. the Big Smoke, a.k.a. Jack—the son of former slaves and first black heavyweight champion of the world, checked into a room at the Seal Rock House in San Francisco. The hotel's tolerance of a colored man, even a great and laureled one, was not to be presumed in the fall of 1909. The primary concern, however, was not the champion but his female companions: Belle Schreiber and Hattie McClay, two white women who were competing for his attention. Johnson, literally an outsize figure, all sinew and ripple, black as a power outage, was singularly free, having concluded that his capacity to whip white men in the ring emancipated him from the other mythologies of white dominion. He would keep company with whomever he chose. Both of them.

It was striking but predictable that this kind of freedom—any kind, really—unsettled the whites and therefore had the same effect among the more cautious blacks. Booker T. Washington—titan, college president and ex-slave—criticized Johnson for his indulgences, for needlessly provoking white men whose anger that a man like him could even exist would surely be displaced onto the shoulders of the rest of the colored people. Having survived the travail of slavery and the onset of Jim Crow, the race, Washington thought, would most assuredly be laid low by some ratio of whiskey, ignorance and the pursuit of white women's vaginas.

This nation has never lacked for scolds, but its black ones have the additional credibility of claiming to offer solutions to a troubled and besieged community. Washington's gospel—the creed that had made him famous and powerful and beholden to white robber barons—held that Negroes were at all times to avoid in-curring the anger of white men, that they were to remain out-wardly subordinate as a means of surviving in a world not made for them. Johnson, posted up in the Seal Rock, might have asked: If those were the terms, what was the point of surviving at all? The story of the two men is trivial save for the ways their exchanges distilled something bigger and maybe even profound about who we are and how it is we get through our days.

At the heart of the various hierarchies in American life is a kind of tiered access to pleasure. Whatever its form—carnal, narcotic, culinary, aesthetic—pleasure is either more easily attained at the higher social altitudes or its indulgence is far less stigmatized there. It's nearly preordained that these scales of joy and indulgence would be bound up in the tangles of race in ways that are both illuminating and contradictory. No wonder then that the Reefer Madness-era prohibitions against marijuana deployed the stigma of interracial sex as part of their fearmongering. It's predictable that the recent trend toward marijuana's legalization followed the path of its mainstreaming by white Americans—a pleasure whose consequences always fell

asymmetrically along racial lines. The American proscriptions against interracial sex literally predate the nation itself, taking root in the colonies a century before the Revolutionary War. Yet the same architecture of law and custom meant to wall the coloreds off from the joys of American life also made black life obscure, curious and exotic.

The archives of slavery are replete with bullshit rationales coughed up by white men who were forever running up to the slave quarters at night, most often projecting their basest desires onto black women. In the 1920s, white voyeurs overran Harlem, raving that black people and their passionate primitivism were the antidote to the sterility of modern life. In the 1950s, Norman Mailer looked to black people, their jazz, their sex, their etceteras, and found a kind of loose-limbed counterpoint to the uptightness of white American culture. This kind of exoticism tumbled down to the present, manifested in a landscape of interracial porn that turns old ideas on their heads: that black male sexuality can exist as a vicarious thrill, mostly for white people, most of them men. The deepest ancestral prohibition proliferates on the internet, one click beneath the digital surface, in ways that reinforce the old ideas. The attempt to outmaneuver race in this society is not unlike a gambler trying to beat the house: The odds are stacked in the house's favor, and even its losses tend to serve a bigger, long-term victory.

The result is a kind of crossroads effect in American life. The classics of American literature (Portnoy's Complaint, Howl) and film (Easy Rider, The Graduate, American Beauty) have tended to fixate on the rejection of suffocating societal norms and puritanism. Philip Roth lampooned the sterility of the American suburb, but Lorraine Hansberry centered her most famous play on the struggle of a black Chicago family trying to get a shot at that kind of boredom. For black people, gaining access to the camouflage of mediocrity and normalcy has just as often been the whole point. One side finds heroism in the pursuit of pleasure; the other shrugs it off as a luxury—a thing that might cost you more than it was worth. We Americans approach the matter of pleasure from differing directions.

All this brings us back to the matter of Jack Johnson. He shot back at Washington, clowning him for being beaten over the head in a red-light district where he'd purportedly sought the company of a white woman. Johnson would be beholden neither to white men's fury nor to black men's fears. Life is finite, and pleasure is the balm that makes this fact tolerable. And how you negotiate the terms of that deal, the particulars of your indulgence, is nobody else's business. The logic of Johnson's thinking still holds up more than a century after whatever went down in that hotel room. When confronted with a moral quandary, the wisest course of action is sometimes to simply stop giving a fuck. 🍆



Joanna David

2019 PLAYMATE OF THE YEAR

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
OWEN REYES

THE HEIR TO THE THRONE



WORDS BY
APEC STA. ANA
MAKEUP BY
MICKO CEQUEÑA SANGKAL
AND
MAY BALTAZAR ALMAZAN
STYLED BY
OLIE PABUSTAN
SHOT ON LOCATION AT
SAFARI HOTEL & VILLAS,
VIGAN CITY, ILOCOS SUR



Born in Manila, Joana and her family decided to move to Japan when she was just 4 years old. At a fairly young age, she was thrown into an unfamiliar environment and culture in a foreign land where she was forced to get herself accustomed with. The 28-year-old stunner had grown to embrace all things new and learn how to be at ease outside her comfort zone.

She then made up her mind to finally go back to the Philippines and settle down for good.

It was not an easy decision though. Choosing to live in the country meant she will be away from her family, her stepfa-

ther, mother, and sister, all residing in Japan.

But she took a leap of faith.

She is independently living alone since 2013—and this paved the way for self-discovery. Joana came to know that she can single-handedly do and achieve things on her own. She took good care of herself and grew so much as a woman through this experience. She made the most of what was given to her and then soon, took control over all the things happening in her life.

The morena beauty developed an efficient and effective routine that perfectly suits her lifestyle for a few years now. She starts her day with meal prepping and making sure she eats as healthy as pos-

sible to maintain that voluptuous bod. In the afternoon, she would do her shift as a customer service assistant in a Japanese online casino in Makati. And after office hours, she injects a little fun by going out and bonding with her friends. Indeed, a good balance of work and play.

Joana also understood that she has her non-negotiables, like fitness. Her toned and carved physique is the result of her hard work and persistence. She has been going to the gym and sweating it out since her early 20s. It was not too long before people started taking notice of her undeniable head-turning stature as she began to book modelling stints and jobs from then on.



For her cover shoot alone, she observed 8 months of non-stop workouts and taxing trainings. And it sure paid off for her, evidenced by her flawless photos.

Ironically though, Joana has never expected herself posing in the nude for the pages of Playboy. Recalling her first ever shoot with the magazine, the 34-24-36 bombshell even cried on set insisting that she cannot do it. She knew she was sexy, but did not have the guts to flaunt her body. But with the guidance and assurance the brand gave her since day 1, she felt the most secured and confident each and every shoot.

“Just look at me now,” Joana proudly uttered.

For her, being crowned as Playmate of the Year 2019 is the biggest turning point of her life. According to her, the title will open a lot of doors and opportunities for her in the future, and she will make sure to exhaust all the possibilities off of it, both for herself and for Playboy.

She knew she had everything it takes to win the title, but she did not stop there. She pushed herself to silently craft and sharpen the deadly that she already has.

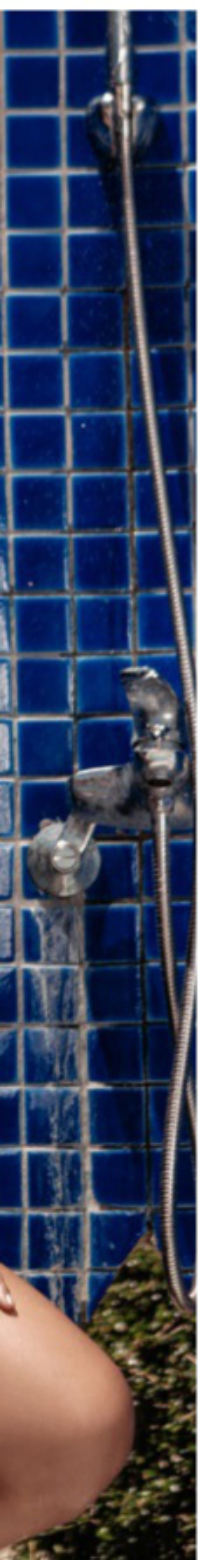
Thus, Joana David just took the throne that was already hers from the very beginning. 🏆





In the end, it is the astonishing capability to adapt that made Joana David withstand a journey full of ups and downs, and seize yet the biggest win of her life as Playmate of the Year 2019.









20

Q

ELY BUENDIA

PHOTOGRAPHY BY

OWEN REYES



THE
FILIPINO
MUSIC ICON
AND LEGEND
LIVED A
PRETTY
GOOD LIFE
AND IT
SHOWS.

INTERVIEW BY
APEC STA. ANA

Y

Q1: You've been with a number of bands all throughout your career, what's the reason behind it all? Is it your personal decision, external factors, a mixture of both, or is there any other reason?

BUENDIA: The only personal reason I think is I like being in bands. I like the whole set-up where you get to collaborate with different minds, different personalities. I've never seen myself as a solo artist. I tried before but for me, it's not that fun to do it alone. So, I could probably be putting up different kinds of bands for as long as I live. I have so many ideas for bands, even band names. [I] like randomly imagine imaginary bands in my head. Some of them actually materialize; some of them are just me daydreaming of realities in my musical career. That's the personal side. I guess, the external part is sometimes things just happen that way. The only conscious effort I put into a band, I think is, with Eheads [Eraserheads] of course, I really wanted to be in a band. After the Eheads, I wanted to do another band that was different from what I was in—and that was Pupil. Then, after that, parang things just happened. I met people who I clicked with musically and personality-wise. Yung Oktaves came about because of that. The Hilera boys (Chris and Bobby Padilla and Ivan Garcia), and I think, Nitoy Adriano was looking for something to do after he left The Jerks also, and that's how The Oktaves came about. And then after that, there's Apartel, which is the most recent one. That also happened because I went around to parties and met people who were looking to do something in the soul genre—funk and soul. It's a mix of both.

Q2: You seem to give each of your bands its own rightful spotlight by not having two or more bands active simultaneously. Why is that so?

BUENDIA: That's more of a matter of having enough time and energy to work on something. I can't really multitask like other people. It's hard enough to be in one band. I can't see how I can be in two or three. You could say that I'm a one-band kind of guy. I can't put my energy into two endeavors at once so whenever I do a project, I just wanna concentrate on that.

Q3: For more than two decades, you've seen the local music industry evolve. Comparing to how the local music industry was when you were just starting, how would you describe it today and the reception of the people?

BUENDIA: In many ways, the experience hasn't changed for musicians. It's a double-edged sword. You can still achieve what you want in a traditional sense. Musicians have this sort of concept of what their careers should be, and it was the same in my time. All the bands wanted to be signed to a label, and that to many artists was the benchmark of success. And it's still the same now. It's just that, some of the rules have changed. Now, it's not as specialized. Anyone can do it. So when you get to that point na you get signed, it's no big deal. You don't even need to get signed. But artists just do it because it's sort of part of the journey of being a musician. It is part of the lore, the tradition, shall we say? The only

difference is it is not as satisfying, looking at it from a point-of-view of a musician who has experienced that. During those days, you really have to hustle and want it, and sacrifice everything to get it to the point wherein a lot of people can hear your music, or even just your friends. You really have to work for it. That's where the difference comes in. Parang some artists today could take it for granted. That opportunity did not exist before during our time. Everybody says that. All the old people will say that—so I guess I'm part of that of the old [ones] for saying that.

Q4: *So when is the better time to be an artist: now or before? Is it more forgiving today?*

BUENDIA: Hindi rin. Marami ring challenges now. Maybe easier in one aspect but may tradeoff 'yun. [Today], you can get your music out there, but then you'd have a thousand other musicians vying for people's attention.

Q5: *What is your personal music preference—the kind of music that will never fail you?*

BUENDIA: That question made me think because nobody's ever framed it that way. It's interesting the way you put it. With that term, it makes it sound so deeper. I guess the easy answer would be the music that I grew up loving and listening to. In a way, whenever I hear those songs, they always elicit the same reaction for me. They never grow old. I still go back to them, and be inspired by them: music from the 70s—disco, soul, a bit of punk rock. I could still count on them to inspire me. Stuff from The Cure, new wave stuff.

Q6: *Meanwhile, as you have matured into the artist that you are today, is there a genre of music that you have never grown fond of or a liking of?*

BUENDIA: I try to be tolerable about other people's tastes in music; to each his own right. There's one genre na parang I can't really get myself to like and it's pop punk. I'm not saying it's bad. Musically, those guys have the chops. It's the concept of it that I find offensive. Just putting those two words together, parang oxymoron: pop and punk. It super diluted and commercialized something that was supposed to be rebellious and pure which is punk. The bands that came out of that genre, I can't listen to it.

Q7: *Do you believe in the idea that musicians are narcissists?*

BUENDIA: I don't know. I think all people are, in a sense. I won't consider myself as a narcissist because that term connotes something negative, 'di ba? Whenever someone calls you that, parang kulang na lang tawagin kang asshole or something like that. But I do get it. All artists seem that way because they are introverted and self-centered, but not in a bad way. It's the way they work. They're caught up in inside their own minds—I was. But then s'yempre, you need to go out of that world, and break out of your shell if you wanna learn enough in the music industry.

Q8: *What is your philosophy as an artist?*

BUENDIA: It's kind of hard kasi I don't usually analyze my thought processes. To answer your question, I guess, to paraphrase loosely, my style is no style.

Q9: *Are you a perfectionist?*

BUENDIA: I want to be. I spent half of my career trying to make perfect songs in my standards at least. Technically, I'm still trying to get there. I wanna play perfectly live. I wanna record stuff perfectly. I'm always trying to strive for excellence. To all artists, it comes as a no-brainer, you can't start out in the industry without having that down. You have to be perfect in all aspects. It's something I'm still working on.

Q10: *What qualifies as “perfect” for you?*

BUENDIA: There are different standards. When I say perfect, I guess, just to be really technical about it, example na lang, recording and producing records. I've worked with lots of artists who don't seem to care about 'just' getting the beat right, the perfect timing—and no one's perfect—but that's why I like recording; you can fix that, you can control everything. You can make everything perfect. If the drummer is off-time or the singer is off-key, you have to make it perfect. Musicians will also disagree





**“THE ONLY THING
THAT’S IMPORTANT IS
I HAVE THE FREEDOM
TO DO WHAT I WANT.
AND I MAKE THE
PEOPLE I LOVE HAPPY.”**

with me on this because some of them actually invest on not being perfect. They think they are being true artists: perfection is not the goal, it’s self-expression—which is true, but there’s a thin line kasi between being pure and sloppiness. And most artists I’ve come across with confuse the two. They think they are being pure by not fixing their guitar tone or not paying attention to the tempo or their singing. To me, it’s sloppiness and laziness.

Q11: *What’s your creative process like?*

BUENDIA: It has changed over the years. I was just starting to write when I was in college, and of course, I had to take time out to actually do something worthwhile or whenever I had the free time by myself, which only happens when I commute from home to school or vice versa. Those were long hours in traffic, so that was a good way to be productive, and I used that to my advantage. Most of the songs that I came up with that time were written sitting in the bus. For a long time, I’ve used that as an excuse to not think of a process for my work kasi I was afraid that if I thought about it too much then the magic would disappear. But then as I grew older, I came to understand the advantages and the need to give yourself enough breathing room to create something that’s worth putting out there. Now, I believe na it’s pretty good to just go out, go somewhere isolated, to do whatever, write, not think, or whatever.

Q12: *Do you believe there is such a thing as “writer’s block” for song writing?*

BUENDIA: Personally, no. I don’t believe in that. There’s always something that you can write about. That’s what I’m talking about when I say I didn’t want to think about that too much. When you start being conscious about it, that’s when the block begins. You pressure yourself and then, it’s a downward slope. So personally no, I haven’t experienced writer’s block.

Q13: *Your sound today is quite different from your early music days. Would you see yourself revisiting your earlier styles?*

BUENDIA: No. But then again, like I always tell interviewers who mention that, that I never really changed my style if you think about it. It all boils down to having a good melody, or a good lyric, or a good story to tell. It’s just the arrangement that’s changed.

Q14: *With Offshore Music, would you say that you have the full creative freedom to create music that you actually want? Up to what extent is your control to the bands under your label?*

BUENDIA: We started managing our artists, so we can’t avoid wanting to tell them what to do not because we don’t think they are up for it or can’t decide for themselves but because you really think you know better because you had the experience, and you’ve seen that happen before. If we can, we give them the freedom to do whatever they want, but we more or less provide guidance pa rin talaga.

“I THINK IT’S NORMAL. YOU THINK YOU’RE OVER. PEOPLE SAY YOU’RE OVER. BUT IT IS IN MY DNA, AND EVEN IF I TRY TO NOT DO ANYTHING, THE MELODY AND THE IDEAS JUST COME. IN THAT SENSE, I DON’T THINK I’LL EVER QUIT MUSIC.”

Q15: *Do you ever see yourself quitting music?*

BUENDIA: I’ve thought about it. A lot of times. I think it’s normal. You think you’re over. People say you’re over. But it is in my DNA, and even if I try to not do anything, parang the melody and the ideas just come. In that sense, I don’t think I’ll ever quit music. What do I wanna do with these ideas? Before it was, ‘Oh, you have to put this out, you have to record this.’ Pero now parang, I can just keep these songs to myself and don’t have to worry about other people liking it or other people buying it.

Q16: *You grew up listening to The Beatles, Elvis, and mostly what your mother listens to. Right now, who would you say are your influences?*

BUENDIA: I can’t say I’m influenced by a lot of new stuff now. To be honest, I don’t really listen to a lot of new stuff right now ‘cause I guess I’ve reached that age where I hear something, and then immediately I say, ‘Oh, I’ve heard this before’ or ‘I did sounds like these,’ and it’s useless now to even get excited about new stuff. But I do get excited about local artists because I own a record label. One of our partners, Pat Sarabia, makes me listen to [new music]—because I don’t get out of my way to go on Spotify and search, I don’t even know where to begin with—she still has her finger on the pulse of the music scene. I get most of the recommendations from her and my son, Eon. I like

them naman. I like their taste. Again, I’ve never heard anything new. But they’re pretty good, especially those who we’ve signed.

Q17: *What’s your take on collaborations? You’ve recently collaborated with Itchyworms. Do you set rules or criteria in terms of the artists you are collaborating with?*

BUENDIA: My only rule is if I like the people I’m working with, and if I can envision us, literally imagine us, playing on stage: what we would look like, what we would sound like, and what our songs would sound like. If I can see myself doing it, then I’m great. I’ve collaborated with a lot of super different genres. I’ve done songs with hip-hop artists; I’ve done songs with pop artists, pop singers, mainstream artists, and underground artists; and it doesn’t make any difference to me as long as I like them and I like their music.

Q18: *What is one misconception about you that you would like to debunk?*

BUENDIA: That I’m a cool a guy? People think I can be a bro or I can be their bro, because of the songs, I guess? Or the way I behave? I’m a really private person. It takes a while to get me going and comfortable in a social setting. And so a lot of fans come up to me, and get super disappointed.

Q19: *With everything that’s going on with your life, how do you keep your sanity?*



BUENDIA: That's a good question. What's sanity? Joke lang. I often question my priorities in life mostly during the times when I feel na I've been disappointed by other people, or I've disappointed myself, or I've disappointed other people. I always come to the realization na most of what happened to me was not really under my control, so I don't let it get to me. I don't blame myself. I don't even blame others na it was their fault. It was just this bubble that we were in during that time. I guess, what I'm saying is, I don't believe it when people tell me I'm this or that. I only believe that I will exist for a few years in this world, and that's it. The only thing that's important is I have the freedom to

do what I want. And I make the people I love happy.

Q20: *Where are you heading next now?*

BUENDIA: Home. I mean it. I wanna go home in a sense na I wanna be doing something I don't even have to think about, worry about na what will this thing I'm doing do for other people, or how will this thing perform in the charts, or how would this sell. I've spent much of my career being in that zone, and it's not the way to live your life especially at my age. So I just wanna be comfortable and at peace. And I don't think it's hard to do. It's your choice naman eh: if you'll still be playing the game, or just pulling the strings—which I prefer now. 🐣



ASIAN BEAUTY

Athena
Baetiong

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **OWEN REYES**

WORDS BY **YURI MANGAHAS**

MAKEUP BY **MAY ALMAZAN**

STYLING BY **OLIE PABUSTAN**

MUCH LIKE THE ROMAN GODDESS OF WISDOM, WARFARE AND THE
ARTS, ATHENA BAETIONG IS MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY FACE IN
EVENTS AND CONVENTIONS.







Her soft words emanate a sense of determination and sincerity, as she seemingly knows the path she's headed in the future.

A WOMAN OF EFFORT

While she considers herself as a reserved individual, Athena stresses how much she values the concept of effort.

"I'm the type who likes to exert my whole effort to my loved ones," she mused.

It's not difficult to see why as the Quezon City-based Playmate manages her family's food cart business while taking on modeling endeavors. She has also achieved so much in her modeling stint since her debut in 2013. Athena has been featured in a slew of calendars, formal events, car shows, and even in a billboard. One can say these achievements are sufficient testament to her aptitude.

When quizzed about what her potential stature in the next five years, Athena gave a definite answer.

"I see myself having my own business, and maybe having my own residence and car too. I'm probably married too when that time comes."

Athena added that she plans to become a flight attendant in the future.

THE PLAYMATE ROAD

The idea of becoming a Playmate did not cross Athena's mind initially as she only attended Playboy go-sees for the magazine's events. She cited how surprised she was when she received the news for the Playmate offer. Athena also shared that becoming a Playmate has provided her an avenue to express herself better.

"I did not anticipate becoming a Playmate at all, it was completely unexpected. Back then, I'd only go to go-sees for events but not for the magazine, so I was very happy that I got in," she shared. Granted the opportunity, Athena would like her next Playboy shoot to take place at the beach or atop a mountainous scenery.

CONFIDENCE IS SEXY

There's more beyond a woman's figure that encapsulates Athena's definition of sexiness. She told Playboy that sexiness equates to an individual's sense of confidence, "If a woman is confident, she is sexy. The way she moves, the way she talks with other people. I think having confidence is a factor."

Athena also mused that while she deems her smile as her sexiest trait, she considers the eyes as men's sexiest body part.

HOW TO DATE A DEITY

Truth be told, it would not take maximum effort to please someone like Athena. She describes herself as the kind who appreciates sweet gestures and acts of extra mile from men.

"I like guys who are sweet, full of effort, and have an initiative to send updates even though I'm not asking. I also appreciate if the guy would avoid other women because he knows it may cause problems between us." 🙄







PLAYBOY'S

PARTY JOKES

PEOPLE talk about sex in 2019 the way they used to talk about having a baby: “The gender doesn’t matter to me, as long as it’s healthy.”—Bri Pruett

MUTUAL masturbation is like paying a handyman to assemble an Ikea bed instead of putting it together yourself. Either way, you’re going to take a nap afterward, but you’ll have a better time if someone does it for you.—Adam Levin

A girl once told me she wanted to experiment in bed, so I poured a bunch of baking soda and vinegar into her belly button and yelled “Behold the majesty of Krakatoa!” Anyway, we’re married now.—Ian Karmel

YOU can tell a man is about to end things when he starts listing all your good qualities in a really sad voice. “You’re smart. You’re successful. You’re funny.” Oh no. And you’re dumping me!—Marcia Belsky

A man asked his reclusive brother what he’d been up to. “I joined one of those multilevel marketing schemes,” the brother replied. “Huh,” the man said skeptically. “Looking to make a little money on the side?” “No, I’m looking for people to stop inviting me to stuff or contacting me for any reason.”—Joseph Scialabba

A girl once told me she wanted to role-play in bed, so I threw 20-sided dice as a saving roll against a cacodemon’s fire attack. Anyway, we’re married now.—I.K.

I’M not sure if anybody knows this, but female dogs refer to doggy style as “the only thing my boring husband ever wants to do.”—Amy Silverberg



LIFEHACK: If you stand outside a nice restaurant wearing a red jacket, people will literally give you the keys to their car.—J.S.

WE’VE all seen the articles asking why millennials are having less sex than baby boomers. Well, you’d have less sex too if you could masturbate to anime porn while ordering Chipotle.—Andy Haynes

IF you’re not five minutes early, you’re five minutes late. Unless you text “OMW” and just show up whenever.—B.P.

IT’S scary how happy the SKIP INTRO button makes us. We’re all so horned up for TV that even Netflix is like, “You wanna ditch this foreplay bullshit?” and we’re like, “PUT IT IN!”—J.S.

LOOK on the bright side: Once you lose your virginity, technically your entire life is postcoital.—Robert Buscemi
I used to have sex with straight men like it was going out of style. Little did I know, it absolutely was.—B.P.

OUR Unabashed Dictionary has been enhanced with four more variations in the term *sexting*..

\$exting = Sexy texting with a prostitute.

Saxting = Sexy texting with the ghost of Clarence Clemons.

Steve Saxting = Sexy texting with lifetime .281 hitter Steve Sax.

Flaxting = Sexy texting with a burlap sack of ancient grain. —I.K.

A girl once told me she wanted to bring another man into bed, so we invited the beloved actor known for his starring roles in Groundhog Day, Lost in Translation and Caddyshack to sleep with us. Anyway, we’re Murrayed now.—I.K.



"If you're a fan of business, I think you're really going to enjoy pleasure."



PLAYMATE OF THE MONTH

Jasmine Aroz

PHOTOGRAPHY BY OWEN REYES

STORY BY NOR SANTOS

INTERVIEW BY APEC STA. ANA

MAKEUP BY MICKO CEQUEÑA SANGKAL

STYLING BY OLIE PABUSTAN



CELEBRATE THE YULETIDE SEASON WITH SOMETHING HOT, SOMETHING
SEDUCTIVE, AND SOMETHING NAUGHTY IN JASMINE AFROZ.

The joyous cheer of the holidays is here once again—and we bring you our 23-year-old Filipina-Pakistani-Spanish Miss December, daring and dashing at 5’5” tall.

Originally living in Davao, she moved to Quezon City with her family to find a better life in the metro. She started working at online casinos to earn a living. Jazmine’s hobbies include playing badminton and cooking. She is confident in saying that her specialties that will wow anyone are adobong manok and beef steak.

Her one goal in life is to finish her studies, and in five years time, hopefully, she wants to own a business and settle down.

Miss December sees herself as a simple and good-natured woman. She enjoys the simple things in life. Being happy is a state of mind, and Jasmine doesn’t think people should settle for less than they deserve. She always looks toward the next best thing. She has been through more than most people her age, but it’s what made her stronger. Life has thrown her challenges, and so far, she’s come out on top. She realized who her real friends are, and that her family always comes first—always.

Her work experiences include modelling stints and car shows, apart from her day job at an online casino. The most memorable shoot she has thus far is her first ever out-of-town shoot in Vigan with Playboy.

She has never dreamt of being a Playmate. In fact, she was anxious when she applied to be a Playmate because of the interviews. Jazmine was so surprised she got accepted and was even more delighted when the day of the shoot came. After the shoot, she realized that Playboy was a caring environment where she would grow as a model.

For women, to be sexy, Miss December advises just to be yourself in and out. You should be yourself around everyone no matter what. You shouldn’t be something someone else wants you



to be, because then that really wouldn’t get you anywhere. Also, don’t be like someone else so they can like you. You should really be yourself at all times. Most people will not like if you try to be like them or anyone else. It’s always best for everyone to be themselves.

For men, she shares that a smile goes the extra mile on being sexy. Jazmine likes her men respectful, decent, and is one who give in the most effort he can. What turns her off are men who curse too much. Her idea of a romantic evening is one filled with roses. Miss December thinks the sexiest part of her body are her boobs while she thinks the sexiest part of men’s body are eyes and butt. 📌







“You should be yourself around everyone no matter what. You shouldn’t be something someone else wants you to be, because then that really wouldn’t get you anywhere.”











HERITAGE

*The
Rabbit
in
Paradise*

BY **CAT AUER**



*Christened in 1965,
our first international club
kicked off an especially heady
chapter in Playboy history*



In early 1964, Playboy was riding high on the success of its nascent network of clubs in cities as far-flung as Chicago, New York, Phoenix, Baltimore, Cincinnati and New Orleans—a veritable galaxy of nighttime hot spots. Business was better than good: The company’s net sales and revenue topped \$30 million, and executives continued to dream big. It was time for an international club, one that would add something new to the Playboy mix: overnight accommodations. For the first Playboy hotel, they turned their eyes southward.

Jamaica had less than two years earlier transitioned from British rule to independence, and its young government was hungry for foreign investment. The gears started turning in Playboy founder Hugh Hefner’s mind, and in January 1964 the company paid \$2.75 million for a beachfront property on the island’s north coast. More than \$1 million went into renovations to bring the resort up to Playboy standards. Bunnies were flown in from the U.S. to train locals in the art of the Bunny dip, perch and stance; it was Hefner’s goal to eventually have a majority-Jamaican staff. (He also wanted to be sure they were taken care of, and the company boasted that “new health and welfare benefits, which the club provides its employees, represent a first in the Jamaica hotel industry.”)

The resulting slice of luxury, nestled in the lush Caribbean rain forest outside Ocho Rios, was christened the Playboy Club-Hotel and opened to great fanfare in January 1965. The company flew in a stable of lucky journalists for the official weeklong launch. Jamaican prime minister Alexander Bustamante attended opening night, as did official representatives of Queen Elizabeth II.

With more than 200 rooms—160 air-conditioned units in the main building and 44 lanai rooms on the beach—the resort was set up to handle crowds. Guests were spoiled for choice of activity: Snorkeling, scuba diving, boating, waterskiing and fishing (in a cove known as Bunny Bay) were on offer. There was horseback riding, tennis and shuffleboard. Cruises in a glass-bottom boat; tours to the nearby Dunn’s River Falls—a 600-foot-tall cataract—and the luscious Fern Gully; dollar-bet pari-mutuel goat races...and for those who preferred indoor recreation, a full room-service menu.

Alongside regular vacationers, corporations including 3M and General Electric booked time at the resort—as did “the entire officer complement of the USS Fearless,” according to *VIP* magazine. Attendance was surely goosed by full-page ads in *PLAYBOY*, which in 1965 had a circulation of 3.5 million.

The warm reception for the Jamaica outpost kicked the company’s confidence into overdrive. In the late 1960s and early 1970s several huge hotel complexes went up: in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin (360 rooms), Chicago (400 rooms), Miami Beach (500 rooms) and Great Gorge, New Jersey (700 rooms). Initially the Jamaica and Wisconsin locations did well, but not the others, and it became clear that, for all its glamour, the empire was overextended. As executive Victor Lownes later recalled, “I only wish Jamaica had flopped. If Jamaica had flopped, they wouldn’t have made all those other big mistakes.”

By the mid-1970s the island’s fortunes had shifted as well, the political situation increasingly unstable. In March 1977, the resort was shuttered, bringing to a close Playboy’s dozen years of tropical paradise. Still, with all due respect to Lownes, the club saga is a reminder that Playboy would be nothing without big dreams.

Preceding pages: Playboy’s first resort boasted an 800-foot-long white-sand beach. **Inset:** The famed one-piece Bunny corset was updated for outdoor service: “Resort Bunnies” sported two-piece waterproof suits. **This page, top:** Playboy’s club magazine described the Dunn’s River Falls experience as a “safe but slippery upward climb from boulder to boulder through the misty spray to the top of the falls and down again.” **Middle:** With a view of the distinctive yellow-and-white rotunda of the main dining room and the bay beyond, this romantic spot was nicknamed the Bunny’s Nest. **Left:** The Shipwreckers, the resort’s roving calypso band, provided live poolside music.



Above: More than two dozen Bunnies staffed the club's five bars and other dining areas. The drinks menu included everything from Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee to cocktails such as the Rabbit Punch—a rum, fruit juice and Galliano concoction. The versatile Bunnies led lessons on “all the latest Latin and American dances,” as well as how to limbo. **Below left:** Snorkelers consider an underwater kiss in the reef-protected cove. **Below right:** Guests could play volleyball on the beach or in the Olympic-size pool. Come nighttime, the pool was the scene of a synchronized water show.





The hotel-club was lavish inside and out, with nature's brilliant greenery rivaling the club's stylish furnishings, which had been selected by Playboy's design group. The property has changed hands since being sold in 1977; today it lives on as a Beaches resort.

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PLAYBOY US

2019

PLAYMATE OF
THE YEAR

JORDANA *Brewster*

A full-page photograph of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, wearing a bright yellow, low-cut, off-the-shoulder dress. She is holding a martini glass in her right hand and is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a deep blue, paneled wall. The lighting is warm and focused on her, creating a glamorous atmosphere.

*In less than a year,
she went from Club
Bunny to December
Playmate to 2019
PMOY. The story of
her path to Playboy
royalty— told here
in her own words—
is as breathtaking
as her beauty*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
ADRIENNE RAQUEL

American society places women in glass boxes, and from all angles people question our choices and project ideas of what we're supposed to be and how we're supposed to look. Within our boxes, we gaze at our reflections in the glass just to point our flaws and probe our feelings of inadequacy. As a double minority—a black woman in America—I'm subjected to a different magnitude of all the above. So to have a monumental force like Playboy supporting people who look like me, especially when it wasn't trendy or accepted, has been life-changing.

Upon discovering I was one of two Playboy Bunnies who had become a Playmate and then Playmate of the Year, and the first African American to reach that milestone, I felt immense pride. PLAYBOY featured the first black Playmate in March 1965, before the Voting Rights Act bestowed the right to vote on all Americans across our nation. This iconic brand, which displays the most beautifully liberated women, was letting America and the world know that black women were among that group. But America as a whole had yet to even acknowledge black people as equals. So for me to reach this accomplishment now—when, according to a 2018 NPR piece, black women are among the least desirable to date; when people continue to behave as if we are good enough to sleep with but not to go out with; that we are side chicks and not wives; that we are fetishes and not humans with feelings; that our melanin makes us less attractive—is an honor I will forever hold close to my heart, not just for myself but for all the other black girls who are left to question their beauty.

In a world where women are not permitted to make decisions for themselves without an earful of judgment, including self-inflicted and woman-on-woman bashing, PLAYBOY has provided a platform to promote not only one's liberation, but one's intelligence. I am a woman with a degree from the University of Miami in broadcast journalism, music business and art history.

I've dedicated my career to bringing life to images and converting ideas into thought-provoking video and digital content. But my intelligence was called into question when PLAYBOY revealed that I was the December 2018 Playmate and I was told by another woman that I was less intelligent because I had used my body to make money. I was taken aback. It was a response I wasn't anticipating, as I didn't see the correlation between nudity and education.

For a moment, I had forgotten about the glass container I'd been placed in, forgotten that we live in a place where women aren't allowed to be multidimensional. A woman can't be intelligent and attractive, a powerhouse and kind, intellectual and feminine, a mother and a boss, and most certainly not a sexual creature along with any of those roles. This body houses the same parts that all women share. Some of them provide sexual stimulation, but this is also the body that creates, carries and nourishes new life. What was it about my body that made it so shameful that it could suddenly erase all that I've done and have yet to do?

Experiences like this inspired me to co-found a nonprofit called Women With Voices. I knew there needed to be a space where women of all financial backgrounds, races and ages could learn from and support one another. When women get together and connect over shared experiences, we understand there's no difference between us. And that empowers us all.

I am a woman who has suffered from anxiety and depression; a woman who, through her nonprofit, is actively working for social change. I sit and ward off questions like "How is being nude empowering? How can little girls look up to you?" My answer: I empower myself and others by using Women With Voices, PLAYBOY and any other outlet to encourage people to unite, learn and follow what they know is true to their heart, because I am a woman with a voice. I am a woman who is proud of her body, her sexuality, her mind, her capacity for compassion.

And I'm a woman who can deal with the judgment as long as it serves to aid women in liberating themselves—and standing confidently outside their glass boxes. 📌











FICTION BY
JOYCE CAROL OATES

After school we began to hear. Certain incidents at night in the old mill town on the Delaware River. Pop-up parties—for (adult) men. Girls from Eastern Europe, Asia, Central America were available for a fee. Girls between the ages of 10 and 16. Or maybe six and 16. They'd been transported by night. Initially, some of them, in the (fetid) hulls of ocean vessels. Then in

the (fetid) hulls of cattle trucks. They did not speak English. Which languages they spoke, the beauty of these languages, the sorrow of these languages, how love was uttered, how grieving was uttered, how loss was uttered in these languages, we did not know. In the (fetid) hulls into which the girls were herded by men who did/did not speak their languages, they must have whispered, shuddered, moaned, wept and sobbed in one another's arms but in languages we did not know.

Their skin that should have been as soft as ours was rubbed raw. The hair on their heads that should have been lustrous as ours was thick with grease. Lice scurried over their scalps, stung and drew blood. Their eyes—oh, you had to know that their beautiful long-lashed eyes were luminous despite burst capillaries and that they stumbled and groped in daylight like the blind after the long solace of the night.

Informed that they would be tortured—"cut to pieces"—if they did not obey. Their families, whom they would never see again (they knew), would be murdered if they did not obey.

(Were there translators? In our imagining there would have had to be translators.)

(Translation is the most tender of all the arts. Yet, in this case, translation must have been crude, cruel.)

Most of the child sex slaves (as they were called) had come from Eastern Europe, had been shipped west. Sold into bondage by their parents, single mothers, state-run orphanages. There was a contingent of Asian girls, including the very youngest. Other girls were captured at the southern U.S. border, where they were separated from their families by Border

Patrol agents, housed in barracks-like camps behind razor-wire fences or, in special cases, delivered into the custody of Homeland Security consultants who arranged for them to be transported in windowless vans to far-flung parts of the U.S.

Sex slaves taken into custody at the southern U.S. border were believed to differ significantly from those from Eastern Europe and Asia because their families had not given them up voluntarily or sold them; indeed, these girls were taken forcibly from their families, who were not likely to forget them, though they had no means, legal or otherwise, of locating them once they were shipped away from the border and into the heartland of the U.S.

Sex trafficking was a lucrative business, we learned. Sizeable cash payments were made to local officials who oversaw the border patrols, as well as to the politicians whose decrees made possible the (legal) breakup of families and the subsequent transportation of the girls in a network of "pop-up parties" across North America.

Rumor was, such parties took place only a few miles from us. In the night as we slept in our tidy clean-sheeted beds, child sex slaves our age (and younger) were forced to endure disgusting sex acts in motels on the outskirts of our town on the Delaware River.

Which motels? We thought we knew. On the curving River Road were the 7\$ Motel, Rivervue Motor Court, Holiday Cabins. Some of these derelict hovels were no longer open for regular customers but available for short-term (pop-up) rentals.

In the night. We'd been told.

Rumors that made us shudder, and grate our teeth in disgust. Rumors that made us shiver, and hide our faces in our hands. Rumors that made us sob in disgust, and laugh uncontrollably. Rumors that made us scream into our pillows. Rumors that bubbled and smoldered like molten earth underfoot where the soil is poisoned by toxic waste—yet when you search for such a place you can't exactly find it.

Though with every fiber of your being you know it exists.

•••

Rumors that stuck like glue in our guts. Rumors that would not be dislodged. Rumors that excited us, made the hairs at the napes of our necks stir.

Out of such stirrings—Mr. Stickum.

At our table in the school cafeteria, leaning our heads close together so that our long rippling hair mingled. Hot wet palms of our hands smacking the sticky table in frustrated fury. Disgusting! Perverts! Gagging sensations, choking our vehement words.

One of us, not the oldest but the most indignant, the one whose father had not long ago abandoned his family—Dad had another way of expressing it—seized a ballpoint pen, began sketching in a notebook.

Swine! Deserve their throats cut.

Deserve their peckers cut—off.

Laughing wildly, joyously. Earthy braying laughter, not “feminine,” “girly.” Every other table in the cafeteria dimmed, our table in the corner shone with a radiant light, levitated. For we were the hottest girls, and we were the smartest girls, and we did not give a fuck who hated us for being who we were and not who they wanted us to be.

One of us, pen in hand, rapidly sketched the spiral device to be known as Mr. Stickum as the others leaned over, staring in amazement.

Where was Mr. Stickum coming from? Out of the ballpoint pen? Out of our friend’s hand? A small-boned hand, fingernails bitten to the quick. But the deft unerring hand of an artist.

See, here—Mr. Stickum.

•••

Hours, days of exacting work and coordination required for the ingenious creation.

Deciding upon the material. For girls unaccustomed to making crucial decisions (beyond clothes and shoes we wore to school), this was the great challenge.

What would be most practical for our purposes, we wondered. Not paper, even thick paper. Not cardboard, even thick cardboard. Not wood, even plywood. No. Because the material would have to be resilient, would be required to bend. As the captives struggled, the material would “struggle” with them but must not snap or break. Brittleness must be avoided.

It would have been helpful to ask an older girl for advice. A woman teacher. One of our mothers....

No! Better not.

The fewer who know about Mr. Stickum the better.

Stealthily we rummaged through the basements and attics of our homes where (cast-off, forgotten) things were stored. We did not have enough money among us to make extensive purchases, but we could not find anything quite right for Mr. Stickum as he was imagined in the sketch.

One windy autumn day after school, riding our bicycles to the county landfill three miles away. For much of the trip the headwind slowed us, but the last half-hour was glorious gliding downhill, standing on our pedals like Valkyries with our hair rippling behind us in the wind.

One of you/them might’ve seen us. That is possible. We like to think so!

How distracted you/they were by the sight of seven girls on bicycles pedaling single file on the shoulder of the county highway. Coasting downhill exquisitely balanced on pedals.

So distracted you almost turned your vehicle around to follow us....

No. Better not. American girls, white girls, girls with families, might be relatives, friends’ children. Can’t touch. Not these.

What a surprise, the county landfill! Acres and acres of discarded trash, furniture, kitchen appliances, garbage bags torn open, spillage that stank even in the open air, yet also clothes that looked still wearable. As we tramped about the landfill holding our noses, scavenger birds fluttered upward on wide beating wings. Turkey vultures—were they? (We shrank from their red eyes, cruel hooked beaks fashioned for tearing flesh.) Also crows, smaller and more animated than vultures, though still large enough to seem dangerous to us, cawing and crying at intruders in the trash.

The angry birds beat us back. Still, in our cautious way(s) we persevered.

That first search defeated by sudden rainfall, wind. Hasty retreat.

The second search took us into dusk. Flashlights were required, but the spirit of Mr. Stickum must’ve smiled upon us: We discovered a fresh mound of debris, including sheets of (scrap) vinyl.

In all, half a dozen sheets of badly discolored vinyl of which not one was entirely whole. But we would need that many at a minimum.

Not easy transporting the clumsy vinyl sheets on our bicycles to a secret place where we could work together—but we managed.

•••

By this time the original sketch of Mr. Stickum had been enlarged on that thin but tough paper used for architectural drawings (purloined from the home office of one of our fathers). By this time we’d acquired an essential piece of equipment—a powerful staple gun (borrowed from the workshop of one of our fathers who wouldn’t miss it—He hardly goes in the garage these days even if he’s home).

Plan was to create a giant flypaper strip in the shape of—oh, what’s it called? Möbius.

Mö-bius. When there is no end to it, a loop, a spiral, spinning, infinite....

But no, Mr. Stickum was not infinite. With the scrap vinyl stapled together, by the time we were finished, and it did take time, Mr. Stickum measured 23 feet from top to bottom. Finite.

Strictly it was not a true Möbius strip we were creating but rather a pseudo-Möbius strip—according to the one of us who knew more math than the rest of us did. For a true Möbius strip is a two-dimensional surface with length and width but no thickness. It has only one side.

The pseudo-Möbius strip to which we gave the appellation Mr. Stickum was identical to a two-dimensional strip—except it existed in three dimensions.

We were anxious that it was supple enough to be given a half twist and that the ends of this (single) strip could be stapled together. Without this crucial feature in the design, Mr. Stickum would not be realized.

Though it sounds easy, it was not easy. Much effort went into the creation of Mr. Stickum in three dimensions.

This was only the start, however. Greater effort came next.

•••

(We never doubted that Mr. Stickum came somehow out of the night and yet dwelt within us like a luminous spirit. For we were of that age when an appetite for justice is as fierce as an appetite for food when you are starving.)

(Where were our parents, you are wondering. Our parents were where they’d always been: in our lives yet oblivious of us.)

(Were our parents not aware? Not...suspicious?)

(Very easy to convince them that we were at one another's houses doing homework, having supper, sleepovers.)

(Were our parents somehow not real?)

(Fact is, Mr. Stickum was far more real to us than our parents.)

(No one is less real than parents. A "parent" is a sort of full-body mask that presents itself to you as a complete entity when in fact, as common sense

will tell you if you take

time to think about it, this "parent" is but a parenthesis in the life of an individual who is essentially a stranger, who lived for many years before you were "born"—who had no idea who you would be, or even that you would exist, for virtually all of those years. Then, when you are "born," this individual employs him-/herself as a "parent" assigned to you for an indeterminate amount of time. The "parent" may be present through all of your life in some cases. Or in some cases the "parent" disappears in time as you become employed as a "parent" yourself, utterly bewildered, perhaps bewitched, but never doubting that you must don your full-body mask in the presence of your child.)

(No, we were not cynical! We were idealists. We never doubted our mission to protect our child sex slave sisters whom we'd never met and would in fact never meet. We never doubted Mr. Stickum, who was hyperreal to us, and always with us, and like a spirit inside us. Like God.)

...

In stealth, in secrecy, by night. In the deserted no-man's-land by the river.

Shuttered factories, mills. Rubble-strewn lots, sites of buildings razed decades ago and their stone foundations open to the night like gaping mouths. Fading signs on tilting fences—NO TRESPASSING, DANGER.

Close by, the rushing river. After a rainfall the water level was high and the hue of mud, bearing with it churning and spinning debris like living things.

Down a weedy incline from the road, hidden from view by underbrush and small trees, broken brick walls. One of the boarded-up mills, decades ago a ladies' glove factory.... With some effort we forced the door and stepped inside and—here was the space we'd envisioned.

Here, Mr. Stickum was (vertically) established in the shadows of the partially collapsed first floor. Taking care not to plunge through rotted floorboards into the cellar below, we worked with flashlights, for it was dusk and then night. Taking care that our flashlight beams didn't shift upward toward the

broken windows and someone driving past on River Road might glance up and see, and wonder what on earth was going on in a deserted factory.

We were short of breath. We began to perspire inside our jeans and pullovers. Nothing in our lives had prepared us for such a challenge, and such a risk. Securing Mr. Stickum to a substantial rafter overhead so that the Möbius strip might hang straight down into the cellar unencumbered. All of us wearing gloves, taking care to protect ourselves as, awkwardly but conscientiously, we applied glue to Mr. Stickum: the strongest glue we could purchase in a hardware store.

There are ordinary glues, including what is called cement glue, and there is epoxy adhesive—strong enough to bind together plastics, wood, metal, human flesh.

In this way, in a succession of nights, working together as a team, we created Mr. Stickum, in design a gigantic (and ingenious) strip of flypaper.

...

Next, we created rumors of pop-up parties on the outskirts of our small town on the Delaware River. Like wildfire the rumors spread online. A day, and a night. And another day, and now dusk.

Drawn by the promise of a pop-up party. Drawn by the promise of child sex slaves. A customer would enter the passageway between the brick walls and descend hesitantly, stumbling in the rubble yet determined to achieve his goal. Hello? Hello? Hello—

Greeted tantalizingly by glossy cutouts of young girls in short shorts, short skirts, skintight jeans. Younger than we were, 10 to 12 years old with luridly made-up faces, long straight (usually blonde) hair falling past their shoulders.

We mingled with the cutout girls. We wore cat masks with stiff horizontal whiskers. High-heeled boots.

Living girls giggling, tittering. Yes! You have come to the right address, Mister! The men saw, their eyes glared red.

They came individually. They respected one another's privacy. They did not wish (perhaps) to identify another, that they not be identified themselves. All very careful. Not at all reckless. Discreetly they parked their vehicles as far away as they could. Practiced in this sort of deception and not (yet) been made to pay for their crimes.

We were excited. We trembled in expectation. Behind our silken cat masks we stifled our laughter as the first customer came eager and ardent into the shadows of the derelict old factory and was guided through a doorway, a step down ("Mind the gap, sir")—a sudden fall, a cry of alarm—and within seconds secured to Mr. Stickum.



Flailing to escape Mr. Stickum, whose gluey surface caught their hair and their struggling hands and bodies. At first incredulous—What is this? What?—trying desperately to pull away, pushing and shoving against Mr. Stickum, who only seized them more securely in his grip.

W-What is this? What can this be? Gigantic strip of fly-paper upon which the predator thrashes, beats his arms like flies' wings beating in desperation only to bind faster, more securely in the glue.

Crying for help. Writhing, convulsing.

The first customers were middle-aged males, unfamiliar faces. Then a familiar face—contorted, terrified, yet somehow familiar—someone we believed we'd seen in town, or somewhere, whose name we did not know. But then—on the third night—Mr. Perry! We were shocked. We were stunned. We could not speak at first, for Mr. Perry was one of the teachers at our high school, who taught driver's education and boys' gym and coached the girls' track team....

But we recovered. We kept our distance, detachment. We were excited, we trembled with dread of what we'd unleashed. We did not take pity on Mr. Perry, who was stuck on Mr. Stickum practically upside-down, a foolish figure, kicking, flailing his forearms, face flushed with blood, eyes virtually popping from his face.

Steinhauer.

He was furious, thrashed so hard, plunged and lunged at us cursing, that he came close to detaching himself from Mr. Stickum by sheer force—but in the end the powerful glue held fast and he was rendered helpless as a fly.

The next shock, Dora's uncle.

And there would be several other shocks: dads, uncles, cousins. Neighbors. Teachers.

Our town was a small town. We'd had to realize that some of the customers/captives might be known to us, but still you do not truly expect to see the face of a man you know well, a man in your own family.... You do not expect such a man to be a sex pervert. Behind our masks, hot tears streaked our faces.

Tears of sorrow, rage. Tears of humiliation.

But no one forced these men to come prowling in the night for child sex slaves.

Ceci returned to us, for Ceci understood. In her household there was a gaping absence. No one knew where Mr. McCreery had gone (except Ceci, who grieved with the others). Mr. McCreery's car was found in the parking lot of the old train depot a mile from the river, locked.

The train depot was no longer in operation, for trains no longer stopped in our town. But there was a bus stop nearby, and so it came to be believed that Mr. McCreery had taken a bus and in

WE TREMBLED IN EXPECTATION. BEHIND OUR SILKEN CAT MASKS WE STIFLED OUR LAUGHTER.

Help me! Help me! But there was no help.

On the following night our first customer was also known to us, and even more shocking—Mr. McCreery.

Oh, this was awful! Ceci's father, whom some of us thought we'd known very well.

Behind her cat mask Ceci was very still. We could hear her breathing, we could feel the pain of her heartbeat.

Taking no note, not staring after her as Ceci slipped away into the night, mortified with shame.

But it had been too late for Mr. McCreery as soon as he stepped across the threshold and into the pop-up place.

Piteously screaming, begging—Help! Help me! What is this? No!

We laughed in derision. Might've been tickled by rough daddy fingers, how we laughed. Howled. Recalling how, in fact, yes, years ago, Mr. McCreery had tickled our ribs and we'd squirmed to escape and never said a word.

The next shock, the next night, a man whose picture was often in the newspaper, a local politician on the town council— Mr.

this way vanished—though no one could remember a man of his description boarding the bus at the time he was believed to have departed.

Fascinating to us how each of the customers/captives generated a (plausible) narrative in his wake and in each case it was believed that the man had left of his own volition and not as a consequence of "foul play."

A sweet sort of knowledge, to know that what others adamantly believe or wish to believe is mistaken and to have not the slightest impulse to correct them.

Having no mercy too was sweet to us.

For always it is expected of girls, as of women, that we will be loving, forgiving, merciful. But Mr. Stickum has taught us that that has been a mistake of our sex.

...

We took pictures of the captured perverts on our iPhones. We recorded their howls of rage, pain. Their pleas.

These were just to share with one another. We deleted all evidence within hours. We were not so foolish as to risk being

caught. What we recall most vividly of those fevered nights: the way we moved secure and swaggering in our masks and high-heeled boots along the rafters of the derelict old factory. Sure-footed as actual cats.

Safe behind the masks, gazing down at our pathetic captives strung below us on the vinyl flypaper. Laughing to see how their agitations made the strip turn jerkily, as in a parody of a dance. How certain of the captives were so frantic to escape they tore off swaths of skin, leaving raw flesh oozing and dripping blood, but still they could not fully free themselves from Mr. Stickum's lethal glue.

The most pitiful, one or two captives who'd managed to free all but their heads and were hanging by their hair, in terrible agony. Bleating, braying, whimpering, murmuring—Help me! Let me out of here! I will pay you....

Pleading with us as we passed just out of range of their flailing hands.

One of us said—Someone should put him out of his misery. Another said, mishearing—No mercy! Not for these perverts. Several captives became berserk, their brains boiled, convulsing, frothing at their mouths. Others suffered heart attacks or strokes and hung limp and lifeless like giant flies whose wings have stilled. One comical fellow managed to strangle himself, having twisted his body around like a pretzel in his zeal to escape the embrace of Mr. Stickum.

It goes without saying all the captives soiled themselves. Not the most disgusting thing about the perverts, but yes, disgusting to our sensitive nostrils.

However, we made no effort to clean their messes. In the grimy cellar of the glove factory, more filth did not matter.

•••

With time we grew more experienced. You might say crueler.

Our capacity for surprise, for shock diminished as each of us had been surprised, shocked more than once by who turned up writhing and whimpering on Mr. Stickum.

One of the perverts called to me, in his distraught state barely able to speak, head downward, limbs askew as in a crucifixion, tears glistening on a pasty-pale face—Help me, I am begging you. I'm not a bad man. I have a family, I have daughters.... I am in such pain! Oh God, please....

In panic I thought: He knows me! But he never uttered my name.

He could see only the cat mask. He could see only the eyes in the cat mask. He could not see me.

I walked away trembling, where I couldn't hear his pleas. But I walked away.

Soon we lost track of how many were stuck on Mr. Stickum. The pleasure of observing them, counting them, taking pictures on our iPhones and recording their cries of misery began gradually to fade.

Success is like stuffing your belly. Hunger fades to nausea.

And so after a few weeks we decided to remove all notices of the pop-up parties from the internet. Our "virtual" identities vanished. Our chat-room friendships came to abrupt ends. Fewer customers were showing up to stumble and fall onto Mr. Stickum, and one night no one came at all. Hard to say if we were relieved or disappointed. Though this was good news—of course.

All the sex perverts in the vicinity are now prisoners of Mr. Stickum and can harm no one else.

We wanted to think this. We didn't want to think that local

perverts had simply become more vigilant and did not wish to take a chance on a pop-up party at a time when a number of men in the area had "vanished."

We debated what to do with the captives who did not (yet) appear to be dead. At first we'd feared that their howls of rage, fear, distress would draw attention, but the deserted glove factory was far enough from town that no one heard. And the murmurous sound of the nearby rushing river muffled the noise.

We never fed the captives, never gave them so much as a paper cup of water. It was not just that we were heartless—we were cautious, and wise: To come too close to the desperate would be to become trapped in their desperation. Especially we feared the slightest touch of Mr. Stickum—we knew that would be lethal.

If we abandoned the factory, our captives would die—eventually—of thirst and starvation, which seemed to us a (relatively) painless death considering their depravity and the wickedness in their hearts. In time, their befouled bodies would be devoured by scavengers—turkey vultures, rodents, insects. In time, their skeletons would fall into the murky cellar. Their bones would mix together as in a common grave.

On the last evening we returned to the factory it was to discover that every captive was dead! Their bodies hung limp and lifeless from the gigantic flypaper strip, streaked with something dark—blood? In the blackness, slow dull dripping sounds.

Someone had surreptitiously slashed the captives' throats. One of us, we had to suppose. But which one?

We never knew. At least I never knew.

She'd succumbed to mercy, whichever of us it was. For slashing the throats of perverts was a merciful, kindly act. A gesture that must have involved a good deal of effort from one unaccustomed to wielding a razor-sharp butcher knife, let alone wholesale slaughter.

Hastily we departed from the factory and never returned.

We have no photos of Mr. Stickum. We have not even the original plans, sketched in a fever of inspiration in our school cafeteria.

All evidence linking us to Mr. Stickum was destroyed.

All of us remained friends—that is, we remain friends. Our bond is Mr. Stickum, though we never utter his name or include it in any e-mail or text message.

We all went away to college. We were good students; in the wake of Mr. Stickum, we were mature and self-reliant students who did not have to be urged by parents or teachers to excel.

Eventually, we suppose, the deserted glove factory will be razed and a mound of skeletons discovered in its cellar—but that has not happened yet. The same old derelict buildings remain on the river behind semi-collapsed wire fences that warn NO TRESPASSING, DANGER.

Most of us return to visit our families several times a year. We were always dutiful daughters and we are scarcely less dutiful now. We lie in bed in the night in our former rooms, with at least one window open. Some of us lie sleepless beside deep-sleeping husbands, awake and alert and suffused with yearning for the time of Mr. Stickum that has faded from our lives. But if we listen closely we can hear faint cries borne on the wind from miles away—Help me! Please help me....

Nothing sweeter than falling asleep to the beautiful music of sorrow, heartrending pleas in strange languages. The wind, the rippling churning river, the cries of the damned. ▼

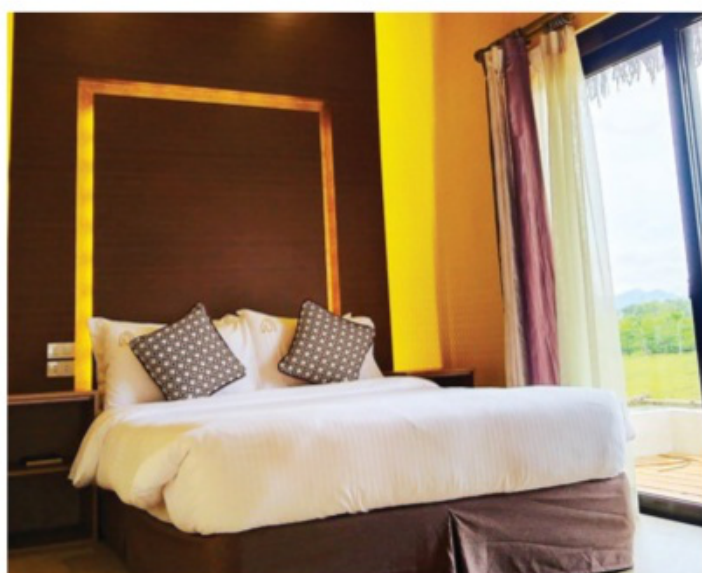


Guests were treated to a three-part Mock Election extravaganza at Topsy Pig in Tomas Morato, Quezon City, last September 23 and 30, and October 7. Playmate of the Year 2019 contenders, together with the other Playmates, graced the three consecutive Mondays and showed how the Playboy lifestyle is. 📺





Playboy Philippines headed North last September 13-15. The Playmates had an exclusive tour of Vigan in its full glory with gracious host Christian Luis Singson. They also had the chance to shoot at the majestic Safari Hotel and Villas, which is also where they stayed at for the duration of the trip.



Safari Hotel and Villas is located at Katipunan Street, Vigan City, Ilocos Sur.

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RECALL



Playmate of the Year (PMOY) 2019 Say David is the perfect projection of sophistication and sultriness as she adorned the cover of our November-December 2017 issue, looking every bit like a true queen.



JOURNEY DOWN THE **RABBIT** HOLE.



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